

The chief Interest of Man :
OR, A
DISCOURSE
OF
RELIGION;

Clearly demonstrating
The Equity of the Precepts of
the GOSPEL, and how much a
due Observance thereof doth
conduce to the Happiness and
Well-being, as well of HUMANE
SOCIETIES, as of PARTI-
CULAR PERSONS.

By *H. LUKIN.* *✍*

Suffer me a little, and I will shew thee what I
have yet to speak on God's Behalf, *Job 36. 2.*
Dicam ego quid sentiam dicent forte meliora
Hostiores. Aug. contra Faustum.

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THE
P R E F A C E
TO THE
R E A D E R.



*Amongst so many Books
wherewith the World
is filled, it may justly
be expected that none
should obtrude more up-
on it, without giving
a fair Account thereof, unless they have
attained to that Repute for Wisdom
which Job had, Ch. xxix. 21. &c. That
Men give ear, and wait, and keep
their silence at their Counsel; wait-
ing for it as for the Rain, and open-
ing their Mouth wide as for the latter*

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Rain: *Such need no Apology to bespeak a Reception of their Labours; but it is far from me to reckon my self of that Number, haud equidem tali me dignor honore: Yet I must confess it is not much that I have to say in my own Defence. The perswasion of Friends, from an Opinion of the Usefulness of such Books as Men publish, is such a common Apology, that the World grows weary of it. If I should say, that scribunt indocti doctique was an old Observation; so that it is no new thing for Men of small Learning to write Books; it might well be retorted, that the World hath suffered so much by such Mens Writings, that it is pity they should suffer any more by them. It will be but a poor Plea to say, that I have written but little, and so shall put Men to the Expence of very little Time or Money for the reading of it; if the little which I have written may not probably be of some Advantage to the World: But this, through the Blessing of God, I am not without hopes of. If one Sinner might hereby be converted from the Error of his Way, I should account*

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count it a happy Fruit, and abundant Recompense of my well-intended Endeavours: But if the Disobedient may not be hereby turned to the Wisdom of the Just, yet I hope the Children of Wisdom will hereby be established and encouraged to hold fast their Integrity, and be furnished with that, wherewith they may put to Silence the Ignorance of foolish Men. If the Ethiopians paint Angels black, and the Devils white, because they are black themselves, and pride themselves in it as their Beauty; this makes not us to dislike our own Complexion; neither can they perswade us to wash ourselves with Ink, that we may be like them. If therefore some Men glory in their Shame, and account it their honour to be like the Devil, or hate Holiness, wherein Men do most resemble God, and bear his Image; as it is said of the Basilisk, that its Enmity against Man is such, that it will fly with Rage upon the Picture of a Man; let not this be a Temptation to us to learn their Ways; let them return to us, let us not return to them, Jer. xv. 19. If our Adversary should write a Book against us,

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(that I may allude to the Words of Job, Chap. xxxi. 35, &c.) if it be of Scorns and Reproaches, let us bind it to us as a Crown; and say as David, 2 Sam. vi. 21. I will yet be more Vile, if to obey God, and be like to him, be to be Vile: But if he will encounter us in good earnest, with serious Arguments, let us go near to him as a Prince, and not fear, having all the Reasons that can be drawn from the Authority of our Sovereign Lord and Law giver, from our own Interest, from Equity, Ingenuity and Gratitude, on our side.

*I shall not be very solicitous or industrious to decline or anticipate the Censures of others: I know it is ordinarily supposed, that Men of no Name, that have not that real Worth which may make others take Notice of them, have that petty Design in publishing such things as are more admired by themselves than by any Body else, to get themselves a Name, and to make themselves and their own supposed Worth known to the World. Let Men think of me as they please; I hope there is none shall think more meanly of me, than I do of my self;
and*

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and I am such an impartial Judge of my own Labours, that I am so far from projecting thereby for any Esteem or Credit in the World, that I should rather, if that were my Aim and Design, have held my Peace, which is the way for a Fool to be counted Wise, Prov. xvii. 28.

One thing I would advertise the Reader of, that this Treatise was written in another Nation, after some Tears Observations of the Lives and Manners of such as in other Parts of the World profess Christianity, both Papists and Protestants, the manner of whose Conversation I was then better acquainted with, than of those of our own Nation: Which I hope may suffice to free me from all suspicion of having any oblique Aspect upon particular Persons, or any particular sort of Men, or of calculating this Treatise only for our own Meridian, and for our own Times. I know, were it in other Languages, it might indifferently serve for any Place where the Gospel hath been preached, and might have had its Use in the purest Times which have been since the Christian Name was known. That little I have seen of the World,

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will easily keep me from judging our own Nation the worst of any that profess Religion, unless the Privileges which we enjoy above others, do raise our Guilt to a greater height: And I am not so unacquainted with the History of former Ages, as being surprized to cry out, O tempora! O mores! or to make that unwise Enquiry, Eccl. vii. 10. What is the Cause that the former Days were better than these? I confess I have sometimes been in Paul's Case, Acts xvii. 16. when I have observed amongst the Generality of Christians in all Places, so much difference betwixt Mens Principles and Practices, and so many professing to know God, which in Works deny him; and this hath made me sometimes express my self with the greater Passion and Vehemence, as knowing the Terror of the Lord, and grieved to see the Misery that so many, without Repentance, are hastning to: For, tho' I owe a special Love to those of the Household of Faith, yet I profess my self a Citizen of the Universe, and so have a Charity and Compassion towards all.

SECT.



SECTION I.

Whether there be any Atheists. What it is that leads Men to Atheism. Those the worst Atheists, that believe there is a God, yet live as if there were none; and account it a mean thing to be awed by him.



Spartan being invited to hear an Oration in commendation of *Hercules*, replied, *Ecquis eum vituperat?* Doth any Body speak against him? And some will think I might *peritura parcere chartæ*, or, rather better employ precious irrevocable Hours, than in apologizing for that which needs no Defence, and which there is such a Reverence of so deeply implanted in every Man's Nature. But upon a nearer Approach, and exact Survey of Things, we shall find there is nothing in the World doth either need or deserve a more serious Consideration and

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just Defence. *The Speculative Atheist* is
such a Monster, that many will hardly
admit of such a thing in nature : And it
seems incredible to them, that any should
doubt of a *Deity*. Yet daily Experience
and Observation refutes our more rational
and retired Speculations, and hath
put many learned Men to the Labour of
proving that there is a God ; this being
the utmost we are able in the Theory to
make good, *That there are none think that*
there is no God, but such as for whom it were
well if there were none : And these being
judicially given up to be seduced by their
own Lusts, first think it would be well
for them if there were no God, finding
his Commands crossing their carnal Interests
and corrupt Desires ; thence they
proceed to wish there were no God, and
by degrees arrive at flat *Atheism* ; inordinate
Passions converting *Desire* into
Opinion, (as we easily believe that which
we earnestly desire) that so having baffled
their Judgments, and drawn them
into the same confederacy with their
Lusts, they may sin without their controul
or contradiction, and avoid the Reproofs
of their Consciences, while they give up
themselves freely to satisfy their vile
Affections. *His gradibus itur.*
I affirm, the *Practical Atheist* is yet a
greater wonder, and a more horrid Monster

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ster than the *Speculative Atheist*: (As *Mirandula* hath well observed) *It is a wonder that any should doubt of the Truth of the Gospel, after so many evident proofs of it; but a greater wonder that any should believe it, and yet live as if it were not true. But take his own Words, wherein he doth so fully and elegantly express himself, Ep. 1. ad Nepotem. Tenet me (Deum testor) aliquando ecstasis quasi, & stupor quidam, cum mecum incipio studia hominum, aut (ut dixerim significatius) meras insanias, nescio an cogitare potius quam dolere, mirari an deplorare: magna enim profecto insania Evangelio non credere, cujus veritatem sanguis Martyrum clamat, Apostolica resonant voces, prodigia probant, ratio confirmat, mundus testatur, elementa loquuntur, daemones consentant. Sed longe major insania, si de Evangelii veritate non dubitas, vivere tamen quasi de falsitate ejus non dubitares.* How many Thousands of Zealots have we that profess the Name of Christ, and presume violently that they shall be saved by him! yet look into their Conversations, and you would not believe their own Mouths, or imagine that they are seriously perswaded that there is a God, an Heaven, an Hell, a Judgment to come, wherein they shall be sentenced to their everlasting Home.

Nay,

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Nay, hear O Heavens, and be astonished, O Earth! hath any People dealt so with their Gods, which are yet no Gods, as Christians deal with Christ? Do *Turks* deal so with their *Mahomet*? Do they scorn those that are most careful to observe the Rules of his *Alcoran*? Are they ashamed to be seen to have any respect to his Laws? Yet I call Heaven and Earth to record against Christians, that *he that turns from his Wickedness, makes himself a Prey*; yea, as *Salvian* complained of old, *Mali esse coguntur, ne viles habeantur. De Gubernatione Dei, lib. 4.* Men are fain to turn Rebels against Christ, and cast off the Fear of his Commands, to free themselves from the Scorn and Hatred of Christians; amongst whom he must go for a melancolick dull Sot, or a sneaking Fool, and one that hath nothing of Generosity, that dare not set his Mouth against Heaven, or defie the Authority of his Maker; insomuch, that he that cannot harden himself against Scorn, shall be jeered out of Heaven; he shall forfeit the Reputation of his Breeding, that shall speak a Word of the Scriptures; he shall pass for a silly Fellow, that will abandon the Pleasures of Sin in hopes of an unseen Glory; and he shall be accounted importunate or uncivil, that shall interrupt Mens carnal Mirth,

Mirth, by casting in the ingrateful mention of God or his Commands, and be thought unfit for the Company of Persons of Quality or Breeding. Of old, they accounted it the Sum and Substance of Religion, *to imitate him whom they worshipped.* Those that adored mortal Deities (such as *Alexander* and *Cesar*) were ambitious to imitate their *Virtues*; yea, some Emperors have been imitated by their flattering Courtiers in their *Defects* and *Deformities*. The Holiness of God is his Glory, and (of all his Attributes) propounded to us for our Imitation; see 1 *Pet.* i. 15. *Exod.* xv. 17. and compare *Isa.* vi. 3. with *John* xii. 40. And yet how do Men glory in their *Shame*, while they are *ashamed* of their *Glory*! *Phil.* iii. 19. *Jer.* ii. 36. But that some are wiser than to be so befooled out of Heaven, Holiness would be hissed out of the World.

How many think it a greater Reproach to call one a Saint, than a Drunkard, a Whoremonger, or whatever is Evil! When the Scripture makes this a Title of Honour, and that from whence they are so denominated absolutely necessary to Salvation. O let not these things be told in *Gath*, or published in *Ascalon*. Let not *Turks* and *Heathens* hear such things of Christians. What God do we worship?
What

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What Saviour do we own? Are they like the Idols of the Heathens? who (as *Tertullian* said of old) *Tam frustra coluntur, quam impune lauduntur*; are worshipped in vain, and may be abused at our Pleasure.

Quit your selves like Men, awake your Reason, and consider what I shall say for God, and for his holy Laws, which are (as the Apostle saith) not only *holy*, but *just* and *good*, *Rom. vii. 12.* so that (as hath been well observed by learned Men) if God had never commanded what he hath done, nor made any Transcript of the Eternal Law out of the *Idea* of his holy Nature; yet, what he hath commanded would have been best for Mankind to observe. There is not only an *Equity* in them, but they are good *naturally*, as well as *morally*, conducing to the Welfare of Mankind, the Good of the Universe; insomuch, that if we had stood on even Ground with our Maker, and capitulated with him on what Terms we would submit our selves to him, and what Laws we would be obliged to observe, we could not have made Conditions more for our own Advantage: or if Christ should wave his Authority which he hath over us to *command* us, (tho' the Authority of the Superior is more to be regarded than the Advantage of the Inferior) he might justly *counsel* us, as *Rev.*
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iii. 18. to observe his Precepts, as that which would be best for our selves; and if we had no respect to his Sovereignty, yet regard to our own Welfare and Happiness might oblige us thereto.

And having evinced the *Equity* of the Ways of God, and the Benefit Men have thereby, I shall endeavour to discover and remove the Causes of this *Practical Atheism* that reigns so much in the World: and tho' I know, after all I can say, the Disease will despise any Remedy; yet let me tell all the profane Scorners of Godliness, till they can deprive themselves of Reason, that is, become Beasts, God and his Saints shall have a Witness in their Breasts against their own Souls.



SECT.

S E C T. II.

The Equity of God's Commands. Love (which is the fulfilling of the Law) founded on God's Goodness, Patience, Bounty. Fear (which with that Observance that is the Effect of it, is the whole Duty of Man) founded on his Power and Wisdom. Ratio rei, or Reason it self, the ground of such things as are of natural Right. God's Sovereignty the ground of such things as are of positive Right.

I Shall begin with the *Equity* of God's Commands, and shew how reasonably he requires the Observance of them; his Nature most justly *challenging*, and the Excellency of his Attributes really *meriting* whatsoever his Law exacts as our Duty. Man hath (as the *Moralists* observe) but a *Political* Dominion over his Affections, not such a *Despotical* and absolute Power as over his locomotive Faculty, and so over his outward Actions; so that he cannot love, and hate and fear, and desire as he list. The Soul being a rational Agent, moveth it self in respect of all Objects, according to what it sees there of *Good* or *Evil*, which

which begets *Liking* or *Aversion*. Wherefore *Arrogancy* is one of the most contemptible Vanities amongst the Sons of Men; it being the most ridiculous thing in the World, for Men to require of others that Honour, Esteem, Reverence, which they have no real Worth in themselves to be a Foundation of. And it is worse Tyranny than that of the *Egyptian Task-Masters*, which required Brick without giving Straw. They say indeed, *Honor est in honorante*, depending on the Will of the Giver; yet it must be *radically* in him that is honoured; there must be a Foundation laid by him, whereon others must raise their Esteem of him. Wherefore the Charge is given to *Timothy* and *Titus*, *That none should despise them*; that is, they were to carry themselves with that Gravity, Prudence, Integrity, that none might have Occasion to think meanly and contemptibly of them. Now there is in God a real Foundation for all those Affections, which he requires of us as the Principles of all our outward Actions, whereby they are formed and fashioned.

First, God requires that we should love him with all our Might, with all our Strength, with our whole Soul; and this is in effect *the keeping of his Commands, the fulfilling of his Law*; Love being the *Queen-Regent*, the commanding Affection of the Soul,

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Soul, the first Mover that sets all on Work (as *Austin* saith) *Amor meus pondus meum eo feror quocunque feror* : Love is the Byas which turns us where-ever we go. We may judge of the Power of this Affection, by observing the Effects of it in our selves; where we do truly love, how careful are we to please? how fearful to offend? how desirous to enjoy? how ambitious to serve? how unwearied in serving? how ready to run Hazards, to undergo Difficulties? What Sympathy is there of all Affections? What Jealousy? So that God needs require no more of us; for if he have our Love, the rest will follow. Now it were not bebecoming the Majesty of God to require this of us, were there not that in his Nature and his Works that did justly deserve it; but there is nothing in the Creature attractive of our Love, which is not eminently in him: *How great is his Goodness! how great is his Beauty!* Zach. ix. 17. that is, those Perfections of his Nature, which being found in the Creature infinitely below what they are in him, make it amiable to us.

Goodness and *Greatness*, where they meet in Man, are very desirable and lovely; but God is *Optimus Maximus* (as he is wont to be called) the greatest and the best; not exceeding us more in his *Greatness*, than
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in his *Goodness*; in his *Glory*, than in his *Grace*, Micah vii. 18. What narrow Bounds did *Peter* set to his Forbearance, when he asked if he should forgive his Brother seven times? What would soon become of us, if the Forbearance of God were confined within such narrow Limits? We indeed pass by many Offences in others, because we know not how to revenge them; but God could every Moment, by a Word of his Mouth, an Act of his Will, let us know what it is to contemn his Authority. And let us but consider the disproportion between God and Man, how infinitely he is above him; and the Nature of God, how holy, and contrary to whatsoever is Evil; and we shall much more admire his Patience and Goodness. We can do good to our *Friends*, we who are Evil; but to do good to *Enemies*; whom we have daily in our Power, and who still continue their Enmity against us, is too hard for us. God is good to *Angels* that never sinned, *patient* only to *Sinners*. Let us but recount the various Acts of his Providence towards us, consider the daily Care which he hath of us, the Mercies which we daily receive from him, the Evil he preserveth us from; what Offers he makes to us of an Eternal Glory with himself; what Means he affords for obtaining

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taining it; how long space of Repen-
tance he gives us; and we shall find our
Obligations to him to be infinitely be-
yond what they are to *Parents, Princes,*
Friends; Disloyalty and Ingratitude to
whom is condemned, abhorred of all.

Further, *the Fear of God is the whole*
Duty of Man, Eccles. xii. 13. that is, *ef-*
ficienter, tho' not *formaliter*; for where-
ever it is, it doth bind the Soul to its
Duty, *Job xxviii. 28. Prov. i. 7.* And I
may say as much for this, as for the
Love of God. Methinks it is Conde-
scension in him, to argue the Matter as
he doth with Sinners, *Jer. v. 22. Mat. x.*
28. when he might let them run upon
their own Ruine, and know by Experi-
ence the Danger that they despise. We
should deride the Threatnings of some
vain Boaster, that should go about to af-
fright us with such things as it were far
above his Power to effect; but the Frown
of a *Cesar*, an *Alexander*, might make us
tremble. It is the most astonishing Mad-
ness and Folly in the World, for Men to
account it Generosity and Braveness of
Spirit, not to be awed by the great
Words of Scripture, to dare to sin, to
take Courage against God like the *Phili-*
stines, *1 Sam. iv. 9.* and to account it
Meanness of Spirit, to be affrighted with
the Threatnings of an invisible God;
whose

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whose Greatness we neither see nor feel, tho' it is our own Fault, we seeing it in Effect every Day. It is he that hangs the *Earth* on nothing, and when he pleases makes it tremble; sends the *Sun* on his Errand every Day, orders the Host of Heaven, making every Star keep its place; thundering with his Voice, so as he can make the Emperors of the World run to hide themselves; setting Bounds to the raging Waves of the Sea, which they dare not pass: and tho' he doth not every Day reveal his Wrath from Heaven against Sinners, yet he hath told us, it is not because he approves of their Ways, or knows not how to right himself; he only stays till the Time of the *Revelation* of his righteous Judgment, and then he will pour out his Wrath like Fire, and make the stoutest Sinners run (if it were possible for them) under the Rocks and Mountains to hide themselves from his Presence. *David* and *Solomon* were both feared for their *Wisdom*; and indeed, *Wisdom* doth make a Man's Face to shine, commanding Reverence and a kind of Veneration from others. Now there is none to be compared to God for Wisdom; he is so wise, he cannot be deceived, cannot be mocked; he sees through the most secret Designs of Men, and laughs them to Scorn; takes the
wise

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wise in their own Craftiness ; makes those that dare transgress his *Precepts*, whether they will or no, to fulfil his *Purpose*, over-reaching them in their most cunning Contrivances, making them serve his holy Ends when they least intend it. Further, he requires that we should acknowledge him in all our Ways, owning him as our *Sovereign* in the Observance of his *Precepts*, as our *Preserver*, in depending on his *Providence*. And what more just and equal ? when we had our Being from him, when we *live* and *move* in him, when we are daily maintained at his Cost and Charges, and are therefore sent to the *Ox* and the *Ass* to learn our Duty ; it being he that gives us all things richly to enjoy, and hath not only *Right* and Authority to *command* us, but *might* have Power to *force* us : so that if we will do any thing without his Leave, or *moral* Permission, we cannot do it without his *natural* Permission. If we run away from his Service, he can command the Sea to waylay us (as in the Case of *Jonah*) and send a Whale to fetch us back. If we would go out of the reach of his Rod, he can make it reach us where-ever we go, as the *Israelities* in their going to *Egypt*, Jer. xliv. 16. In short, he commands the boisterous Winds, the unruly Waves ; the Angels, that excel in Might and Glory ;
the

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the Devils, that are filled with Rage and Envy ; the Sun, that as a Gyant runs his Race, and makes it stand still at his Pleasure ; the Stars, whom he makes as his Host to fight his Battles ; the Frogs, the Flies, the Lice, the Bears, the Lyons, the Ravens ; as the several Instances in holy Scripture shew. All these are at his Beck, and he sends them at his Pleasure. Degenerate Man only (for whom he hath done more than for any of the Works of his Hands, and whom he hath made capable of more Happiness than the whole visible Creation) casts off the Authority of his Creator in those things, wherein especially it would be his *Wisdom* to make a *Virtue* of *Necessity* : for when Men will venture upon any thing without asking God's leave, or taking his Counsel, he stands by and derides their Counsels ; and tells them that he is wise also, and will bring Evil upon them, and not call back his Word : What he saith shall be done, none shall disannul it ; when their Designs which they would undertake without him shall come to nothing, and they perish in them, *Isa. xxxi. 2.* Thus God will sooner or later teach all, what it is to despise his Authority, or to dispute his Commands.

As for our outward Actions, (what I have already said concerning our internal

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nal Affections, and those Acts and Attributes of God whereon they are grounded, being supposed) tho' they should not be of any natural Right, or have any intrinsic Goodness in them, antecedently to any Command of God concerning them, (which yet doubtless some have, and are therefore commanded, because good, as those which are grounded on the Precepts of the Law of Nature) yet as we say of the *Credenda*, or the Things which we are to believe, tho' our finite Understandings be not able to comprehend the Nature and Causes of some of them, yet we have reason enough to believe them, because they are spoken by him that cannot lye; so I may say of the *Agenda* of Religion, tho' they should not be of *natural Moral Right* (which yet many of them are) yet being commanded by him who is so wise and so good, to whom we have such Obligations lying upon us, and on whom we have such an absolute Dependance, we have all the reason in the World to do them, without murmuring or disputing.

And tho' the Sovereignty of God is such, that he might justly try our Obedience; and make us know our Subjection to him, by requiring of us such things as are merely of *positive Right*; yet it is evident, that in what he hath required, he hath

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hath not stood much upon his *Sovereignty* and *Authority*, but hath commanded such Things as he might justify at an impartial Bar, tho' Man were an Independent Creature, and co-ordinate with him : And this will sufficiently appear by the ensuing Discourse.

S E C T. III.

The Advantage which Men have by Religion, in respect of their good Name; Honour being both a Moral and a Natural Effect of Vertue and Holiness. The Hypocrisy of some that profess Christianity, an Argument of the Excellency of it. Shame the present Reward of Sin. None dare speak against Holiness, or holy Men, as such.

WHAT I have hitherto said, hath been *ab aquo* ; I shall now argue *ab utili*, and shew what Advantages come to Mankind by a due Observance of the Rules of the Gospel, whereby the Truth of the Apostle's Assertion will evidently appear, that *Godliness is profitable to all things*, and is the chief Interest of the World.

B

And

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And first, let me consider Man in his *personal Capacity*, and his several Interests in such a Respect; and I will begin with that which is most *extrinſick* to him, *viz.* his *good Name*, which Solomon justly ſaith, *is rather to be choſen than great Riches*: and he adds a Reason of it, *loving Favour is better than Silver or Gold*; that is, the Effect of it; it commands a friendly Respect from all, and ſo entertains him where-ever he goes; it is his *Harbinger* to beſpeak him in all Places an honourable Reception; it is his *Surety*, to vouch him in all his Dealings with others; ſo that there is nothing can more ſweeten a Man's Life to him, and indeed nothing which generous Spirits do more eſteem. No greater Incentive to Vertue among the Heathens than Honour: and it is ordinarily ſeen, that Men can more eaſily bear the Loſs of Goods, than Diſgrace or Contempt; a Breach in their Eſtate, than a Wound in their Name.

Now I will not here ſpeak of that Honour, which after a few Days ſhall be put upon all godly Men, when they ſhall appear with Chriſt in Glory, and ſhine like the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father; while others ſhall be cloathed with perpetual Shame: Nor will I ſpeak of Honour, as it is a *moral Effect* of Godlineſs; God having promiſed to honour thoſe that

honour

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honour him. And he that gave the *Israelites* favour in the Eyes of the *Egyptians*; and made them to be pitied of them that carried them away Captive, can give a Man Esteem and Repute among others.

But I shall speak chiefly of *Honour*, as it is a natural Effect of Godliness: and it is worthy to be considered, that that which at first View seems to reflect dishonourably upon Religion, and which many improve to the Reproach of the Professors of it, doth, upon a serious Weighing of the whole Matter, exceedingly commend it, and argue something of more than ordinary Worth in it; and that is, the *Hypocrisy* which is found among *Christians*. This implies, that there is something in it which is attractive, that Men should use such Industry to counterfeite it, and seek by a feigned Shew of it to insinuate themselves into the Esteem of others, whose good Opinion they think most considerable. However, as I have already said (and shall say again in due place) there are many good Men for it; yet this is an evident Proof that it is a Thing of good Report, and Praiseworthy. Though we do not esteem every Thing that looks like Gold, because it is sometimes counterfeited, yet this is an Argument of the Worth of that which is Gold indeed: So, tho' it is true, every one that makes Pro-

B 2 fession

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possession of Godliness, doth not presently deserve the Honour and Respect of a godly Man, because there are many Hypocrites; yet it is an Argument of the greater Worth of such as are godly indeed. Pearls and Diamonds are oftner counterfeited, than those Things that are of mean Value. What is there that begets an higher Esteem amongst Men, than that *Humility, Meekness, Goodness, Charity, Justice*, which the Gospel requires, and which every true Christian in some Measure hath? It makes a Man (as was said of *Kespasian*) the *Darling of Mankind*, and makes his Memory blessed. What is the ordinary Character which you shall hear of such a Man? He was a good Man, a quiet Man; you might have put your Life in his Hand, his Word was as good as his Bond. And however the Devil cheats Men with the hopes of Esteem in the World, by a careless neglect of Religion, tho' they gratify the greatest Part of the World (in some Respect) as they justify their wicked Ways by their own Practice; yet we shall observe (through the just Judgment of God) *Shame is the just Wages of Sin*. *Prov. xiii. 24. Rom. vi. 21.* And indeed the *Heathens* themselves made Honour the Reward of *Korras*; so that a wicked Man, according to them, is not capable

pable of it. *Pride* is that which all abhor; *Swearing* and *Blaspheming* are such Sins as none gain by, and therefore will commend no Man for: *Drunkennes* discovers so much of a Man's Weakness, that it makes him obnoxious to every Man's pity or scorn: *Lying*, *Injustice*, *Oppression*, and other Sins against the *second Table*, being immediately against our Neighbour, and so prejudicial to the Interest of Mankind, cannot purchase any Man any Honour or Esteem. And tho' it is true, as I have before complained, that a godly Man is exposed to Scorn and Reproach; yet, *first*, it is of such whose Reproaches we may glory in, and bind to us as a Crown. What was said of *Nero*, is true of them, that it is likely to be something that is good, which they speak against; yea, commonly such, before they die, justify those whom they reproached; and when they grow wiser, come to be of their Mind: When they come to lie on their sick Beds, and to be convinced by Sense and Experience, of what they would not believe, or at least consider before, that there is a *Vanity* in every Creature, that they must die, and that their former Pleasure will yield them no Comfort at such an Hour: then they reproach themselves more than formerly they reproached others; then they find that they were the Fools for de-

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spising Instruction, and wish now they
were in the Case of those whom they de-
spised.

And, which is yet more observable,
Godliness doth command such an Esteem
from all, that none dare speak against it;
and you shall hardly hear any godly Man
reproached as such; as the *Jews* would
not own that they stoned Christ for a good
Work, but for *Blasphemy*: When wicked
Men reproach others, they will not by
any Means acknowledge that it is for
Godliness, but for *Ungodliness*, for *Hypo-*
crisy; for being too nice and superstiti-
ous, doing more than God requires; for
Covetousness, or such like Sins: so that,
by their own Confession, Sincerity, ob-
serving what God hath commanded, Cha-
rity, &c. are good and commendable;
and so they are condemned out of their
own Mouths. Let Sin seek Excuses and
Subterfuges; *Vertue* (as *Truth*) seeks no
Corners, knows no Shame.



SECT.

S E C T. IV.

How much Godliness conduceth to the preserving and increase of Mens Estates, which Sin doth, like a Canker wiste and consume. An Illustration of Jer. xvii. 11. and Hosea ix. 11. Objections answered, which Men make from that Justice and Charity which Religion obliges Men to, and from those Expences and Losses which it exposes them to, as also from Experience and daily Observation.

TH E next Interest of Man in his personal Capacity which I shall consider, is the Furniture of this Life for bearing his Charges in his Pilgrimage, while he is on his way towards his long Home. And tho' *Riches* (by reason of the Abuse of them) sometimes seem to be undervalued both by God and Man, in the Scripture and other Writings, yet in themselves they are useful and desirable. And if we should understand these things absolutely and simply, which are spoken of them but in a certain *Respect*, and *secundum quid*, (as they speak) it might rather be said, The Curse of the Lord makes rich than his Blessing. Thereby a Man

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is capable of doing Good to others ; and our Saviour hath pronounced it more blessed to Give than to Receive : He is able to command his own Affairs ; he is freed from the Temptations of Poverty to a sinful Flattery and pleasing of Men, incroaching upon God's Time or Mens Estates ; from distracting Cares about the Necessaries of this Life: They are a Defence to him, not only in his own Conceit, but really lifting him up, that the Foot of Contempt may not trample upon him ; and that whatever is Praiseworthy in him, may be more conspicuous to others ; which is little taken Notice of in the Poor, whose Wisdom, yea, all other Graces and Vertues are despised. Now as *the Race is not to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong* ; so neither are Riches always to the Diligent, or Industrious, or Wise, but to those whom God favours with his Blessing. *Godliness hath the Promise both of this Life, and that to come* ; tho' God hath not absolutely promised Abundance or Superfluities, Necessaries he hath ; so that tho' the *Lyons* (whereby we may, according to the Language of Scripture, understand those who have both Cruelty and Power to oppress others) *may lack and suffer Hunger ; those that fear the Lord shall want no good thing.* Again, Godliness may be ranked amongst the
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the *moral* Causes of *Riches*. Do but consider what diligence the Gospel requires in our particular Callings; and though (according to what I lately said) this is not the only or solitary Cause of *Riches*, yet it is a means which God doth ordinarily bless. Do but farther consider what Sobriety and Moderation is required in Meat, Drink, Apparel, and we shall easily conceive how much it doth tend to the Increase of Mens Substance, and stopping up those Chinks and Crannies, at which other Mens Estates do run out. On the other Hand, we shall find many Sins, both *Moral* and *Natural* Causes of decays in Mens Estates. It is true, all Sin doth make Men obnoxious to the Curse; but there are many Sins which derive a Curse upon Men, which in a special Manner (like the Rust) devours their Riches; particularly *Oppression* and *Injustice*: the Prophet *Jer. xvii. 11.* elegantly shews how the Designs of Men for setting up themselves, thereby prove abortive: *As the Partridge sitteth upon Eggs and hatcheth them not, so he that getteth Riches and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his Days, and in the End shall be a Fool.*

Some Birds Men take care of, to secure them against Injuries and Violence, as those that are *Tame*; others there are

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whose uselessness makes them neglected of all, and so is their Security; others there are, able to resist the Violence of the Birds of Prey; the Partridge is none of these, and so is most likely of all others to miscarry, and prove a Prey to Violence: So the unjust Oppressor may indeed gather Riches, but he shall soon leave them; *himself* is like the *Grass*, but his *Glory* is like the *Flower* of the *Grass* (which oft falls off while the *Stalk* stands) and he shall out-live his *Glory*: Some Mens *Glory* flies away from the *Conception*; others from the *Womb*, others from the *Birth*, *Hosea* ix. 11. some Mens designs fail while they are projecting and contriving them, others while they are travelling with them, or labouring to effect them, *they fade in their ways*; others when they have just attained them, and arrived at their End, as the Rich Man; but when he should solace himself in the Enjoyment of them, they shall be taken away like the Corn and the Wine in the Harvest or Vintage, and in his end he shall be a Fool, that is, according to the Language of the Scripture (wherein Words of Existence are put sometimes only for Appearance and Manifestation) he shall appear to be a Fool, though formerly he seemed to be of the Wise of the World, that knew how to get most for himself

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in the scuffle of the World, wherein almost every one scrambles to get as much as he can to himself, to make his own Heap biggest; but increasing that *which is not his own*, *Heb. ii. 8.* but of right belongs to others, he proves like the Dog in the Fable, that not content with what he had, but catching at more, lost all. So Adultery (through the Curse of God) is a devouring Fire, that consumes and wastes a Man's Substance. So the Covetous unmerciful Man unfolds that Riddle, *Prov. xi. 24.* he scatters by gathering, whiles he retains his Riches, when God requires them for the Relief of the Poor; or by his Extortion and Oppression squeezeth out the Sweat, yea, it may be the Blood of the Poor: What is so either gotten or kept, proves a Canker to his Estate, to devour it. Yea, there are many Sins, which are the natural Causes of Poverty; and if God should leave Men only to the genuine natural Effects of their Sin, they would soon fade in their ways, as the Apostle saith, *James i. 11.* *By means of a whorish Woman, a Man is brought to a morsel of Bread;* her Words are so ensnaring, he is lost that is once entangled with them, and it is a sad sign such a one is abandon'd of God. So the unmerciful Man and the Oppressor exposeth himself to the Curses of the Poor,
yea,

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yea, to their Rage and Violence, if ever they have the Opportunity of a popular Tumult. So, how doth Pride (like Rust) eat up Mens Silver and Gold! *Drouziness cloaths a Man with Rags*: so Gluttony and Drunkenness feed upon Mens Estates, till they have devoured them. Envy and Malice beget Contentions and Quarrels, which cast Men into chargeable Law suits. If Men would in their Books of Accompts allow some Pages for their Lusts, and set down what they spend on them, more than what *Nature, Reason, Religion* require; and write, so much laid out at such a time for *Pride*, so much at another time for *Pleasure* and *Voluptuousness*, so much for *Envy* in a Law suit to vex such a one, so much for Entertainments, Buildings, Gardens, Festivals, Pomp of Funerals, (I speak not against a *Decorum* and Moderation in such things, answerable to a Man's Rank and Estate, but only against the Superfluity and Excess in these things, which Mens own Consciences will tell them Ambition and Vain-glory put them upon) let them set down so much *lucrum cessans*, from Idleness and Negligence in their particular Callings; and they shall find such a Retinue of Lusts (which Religion would make them shake off and abandon) as chargeable as a train of Servants, though
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the old Complaint should be true, *Quot servi, tot Fures.*

Notwithstanding, all that I have said, many have such a prejudice against Religion, that they think if a Man begin seriously to addict himself thereto, it soon spoils his thriving in the World. As *first*, it is observed by many, that it takes up much of Mens time; and many, as soon as they begin to be so strict in matters of Religion, neglect their particular Callings. To this I answer, God is but little beholden to Men that complain that his Service takes up too much of their time. There are none in the World amongst the devout Orders, that consecrate their time more entirely to God, than Thousands do to the Devil and their own Lusts: Yea, how few are there that do allow more time to Pride, in adorning themselves; to Pleasure, in vain Sports and Recreations; to idle Discourse, to fruitless Visits, to superfluous Sleep and Ease, than God requires to be spent solely in his Service? He allows us time enough for our private Affairs and particular Callings. God is not served only in Prayer and Reading, and hearing his Word, but in the Works of our ordinary Callings, *Col. iii. 23.* What is there said of Servants, is true of others also in their several Stations, while they du-
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ly attend their lawful Vocations. It is true, some Christians may not have Prudence to share their time equally betwixt their *general* and *particular* Callings; but such are ordinarily observed to be young Converts (as they are called) that is, such as have had but late Acquaintance with the Power and Practice of Godliness; and something is to be indulged to these, who at first Conversion many times find so much delight and sweetness in Exercises of Religion, that they know not how to leave them off. We know under the Law, he that had married a Wife was dispensed with the first Year to stay at home and solace himself with her, and not forced to go out to War.

Some again are ready to complain of the Charge of Charity which Religion doth oblige a Man to. To such I answer, Nature it self doth bind a Man to the same Charity, that Christianity binds him to; only Christianity directing us to right Principles and Ends in such Actions, makes them turn to our good Account. So that *Christian Charity* is the best *Usury*; God gives us Bond for Payment, *Prov. xix. 17.* and he is a good Pay-Master. If a Man would lay up somewhat against an evil Day, he cannot put it into better Hands, *Eccles. xi. 2.* If the worst come, and the hand of Violence should seize

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seize on his Estate, yet he may say with him in *Seneca*, *I have that still which I have given away*. Yea, a Man of meer Humanity and Generosity, cannot but have such a Sympathy with others in their Sufferings, that in relieving them, he relieves himself; as *Alexander* when *Darius* sent a Compliment to him by his Ambassadors for his Civility to his Wife, Mother, Daughters, whom he had taken Captives, returned him Answer, that it was in vain to Complement with an Enemy; and the Favour he had shewed to them, was not so much out of Affection to him, as to satisfy his own Nature, which could not insult over the Misery of others.

For the Charge of the Service of God, let Shame for ever cloath them as a Garment, that complain of it. Let a Heathen, an *Alexander*, condemn them, who when *Leonidas* reproved him for spending so much Incense in Sacrifice to his Gods, and told him he might do that when he had taken the Countries from whence it came; having taken them, sent him Incense in Abundance, and sent him Word, that for the Future he should not be sparing in his Offerings to his Gods, for he had found by Experience, that what was offered to them, they paid with Usury. And farther, our Expence now under the Gospel about the Service of God, is nothing to what it was

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was formerly under the Law. What I said before in Respect of Time, I may say here in Respect of Estate: What Men spend upon religious Uses, and Works of Charity, is not comparable to what Men spend upon their Lusts. And whosoever call themselves Christians, should disdain that any should be more free in the Service of the Devil, than they are in the Service of Christ. Neither is it Christian Charity, but blind Zeal and Superstition, that makes Men give away their Estates (as is ordinary amongst the Papists) to maintain others in ease and idleness, under a Pretence of devoting themselves to religious Exercises, and the Imitation of I know not what pretended Saints.

Others are not ashamed to complain of that Justice and Equity that Religion doth oblige a Man to observe in his Commerce with others, as hindering their thriving in the World: But I have said enough already of the Curse that follows Injustice and Oppression, to shew how vain this Objection is, besides the Punishment inflicted by Man for these Sins, which are the more odious to Men, because they are against our Neighbour immediately, (as many other Sins are not) so as Men are more sensible of them, and as much as they can, avoid having any thing to do with such as are false

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false and unjust in their Dealings with others.

Some object farther the Sufferings which Religion exposeth a Man oftentimes to. But to this I may answer, as to the former, Men ordinarily suffer more for Sin. The *Devil* hath had more *Martyrs* than *Christ* in most Ages of the World; that is, more have suffered for doing the *Devil's* Works, and fulfilling his Lusts, than for the Service of *Christ*. How many are there that suffer Imprisonment, Banishment, Loss of Goods, yea, of Life, for Injustice, Oppression, Murther, Adultery, Sedition and other Sins? And I have oft thought it might be a great Comfort to one imprisoned for the Cause of Religion, for *Christ's* sake, to think he might have suffered the same for his Sin, if he had been left to his Lusts as others; or for his *Misery*, for Debt and Poverty: whereas now he suffers the ordinary Lot of Mankind, in such a Cause, on such an Occasion, as it shall prove his greatest Advantage, God rewarding so bountifully, whatever a Man undergoes for his Sake, both with present spiritual Comforts, and future everlasting Glory.

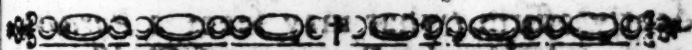
Lastly, Experience may be objected against all that I have said, it being observed, that the Followers of *Christ* have the least share ordinarily in the things of the

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the World. But I answer to this, It is not because Religion is any way prejudicial to Mens worldly Estates, but because God in his free and wise Providence doth for the most part choose the Poor of the World to be the Heirs of his Kingdom, both that he may confound the Wisdom of Men, and stain the Pride of their Glory, choosing contrary to Mens ordinary Judgment and Choice; and also because out of his Bounty he is pleased to give many a Portion in *this Life*, to whom he intends none hereafter. Farther, however God doth not many times give his Children Superfluities, he ordinarily provides for their Necessities: and many may make *David's* Observation, that *they have not seen the Righteous forsaken, nor his Seed begging their Bread.* Yea, I may add, as *Psal. xxxvii. 6.* *A little that a righteous Man hath, is better than great Treasures of many wicked;* because he is satisfied with what he hath.

The Vanity of the Creature proceeds from the Vanity of Mens Minds: When Men will make the Creature their chief Happiness, they must needs find it Vanity and Vexation of Spirit, because it doth not answer their Expectations from it; they looking for more from it, than ever God put in it. But a godly Man having something else for his chief Good, which
is

is sufficient to fill his most enlarged Desires, and to answer the highest Expectations that he can have from it, he makes use of the Creature only for the end to which God hath appointed it, to supply his bodily Necessities, to be a *Via* in this his Pilgrimage towards Heaven; which end it is sufficient to answer; so that there is none can rejoice and take Pleasure in the Creature more than the godly Man.



S E C T. V.

The Influence which Religion hath even upon our Bodies; how far it conduceth to our Health. Diseases of the Body ordinarily proceed from the Distempers of the Soul: That Temperance, Diligence in our Callings, and Moderation of our Passions, which the Gospel requires and teaches, is the best Remedy against them.

THE next Interest of Man which I shall speak of, doth yet more nearly concern him, and that is *Health*; which is not only, as one calls it, the *Paradise of all sensual Pleasures*, wherein they

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they grow and flourish ; but the *Salt* that seasons all our worldly Comforts, without which we can find very little Savour in them ; yea, are not only incapable of enjoying all other Things, but of enjoying our selves ; yea, the want of it makes us as unable to do good, as to enjoy good, but only as we may be Examples of Faith and Patience to others.

Now though Religion chiefly concerns the Soul, and seems to have little Influence on Mens Bodies, yet I will confidently affirm (what may seem a *Paradox* to many) that the Precepts of Christ well observed, would free as many from Diseases, as his Miracles ; they would prevent as many Diseases as his Miracles cured. How many are there whose Bodies are filled with the Sins of their Souls, which they have tired and worn out in the Service of their insatiable Lusts ! which are like furious Riders, that tire out the Beasts they ride on, before they be tired themselves. Though Men are not presently sensible of decays in their Health by Riot, Drunkenness, and such like Sins ; they lay in daily the Seeds of those Diseases which many groan under in their old Age, though others feel them sooner. We ordinarily say, that *Excess* kills more than the *Sword*. By *Excess*, we are not only to understand eating and drinking

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to Surfeit and Drunkenness, or till Nature be so oppressed, that it dischargeth it self of its Burden; but when Men make their Appetite, not their Reason, the measure of their Allowance. It would require the Skill of a Physician, to enumerate the Diseases which are the effects of Mens Sins: but every one may easily observe, that the ordinary Rules which the best Physicians prescribe for the Preservation of *Health*, require nothing more than *Temperance* and *Exercise*. The former, Religion strictly enjoyns; and though it do not require the latter as such, or under such a Notion, yet in effect it requires it of most, commanding Diligence in Mens Callings, and condemning Idleness, which is the source of so many Diseases, as daily Experience will evince, it being obvious to the Observation of all, that *Weakness* is the poor Man's Privilege, and *Sickness* most common among the Rich, who live in Idleness; though they have many other Advantages above the Poor, for the Preservation of their Health.

Besides these two Causes of Sickness, there is a third, which Religion doth remove, or at least correct; and that is, inordinate Passions, such as *Anger*, *Fear*, *Sorrow*, *Envy*; which have a very malignant Influence upon the Body; and there

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is scarce any thing which tends so much to the poizing and balancing of the Humours of the Body, (which is so necessary for the Preservation of the Health) as a well-composed Temper of Mind, and calmness and quietness of the Soul; which Religion doth not only teach, but (which is more) doth in a great Measure effect; and therein exceeds the *Morals* of Philosophers, as we shall in due Place more fully see.



S E C T. VI.

Religion forbids us not any Pleasures which are agreeable to Nature, Reason, or Man's own Interest. None can more freely enjoy Pleasures than a godly Man.

THERE is yet another thing which many account their great Interest (and their great Prejudice against Religion is, that they conceive it inconsistent therewith) and that is *Pleasure*. Now if we take *Pleasure* in a large Sense, as it is taken in Scripture; that inward Joy, Comfort and Satisfaction which accompanies a holy Life, and those everlasting Pleasures

at God's Right Hand, which a holy Life leads to, will fall afterwards under Consideration. And as for those *bodily Pleasures*, which in this Place are chiefly intended, Religion doth not at all forbid them, nor deprive a Man of them; and it is an unjust Calumny of some, that God hath put Inclinations into Mens Nature to such things as he hath forbidden him, and that this is the chief Cause of so much Sin in the World: But these Men know not what Spirit they are of. It was the Suggestion of the Devil to Man in Paradise, that God (as if he had envied Man's Happiness) had laid a restraint on them, to keep them from that which (as the Devil would persuade them) he knew might better their Condition, and advance them to an Equality with himself; as if it had been a small Matter, that he had allowed them such a Liberty to enjoy all the Pleasures of Paradise, and to eat of all the Fruit of it, save only that in the midst of the Garden. But they received a just Recompense, for believing the Devil rather than God. It is the same Spirit, which now persuades Men that God hath dealt hardly with us, to interdict us the Enjoyment of that wherein we might find such Pleasure and Satisfaction; whereas he hath rather manifested his Goodness to Man, in that he

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he hath put into him such Inclinations, as he may take Pleasure in those Things which are necessary for the *Propagation* of the *Species*, or for the *Conservation* of the *Individuals* of Mankind : and he doth not forbid our Pleasure in these, but only forbids *Gluttony* and *Drunkennes*, which is Excess in the Use of Meats and Drinks; and *Adultery*, which is the misplacing of those Desires which he hath provided for the Satisfaction of without Sin : And we have no cause to complain of God's bounding of us in these Things, but rather wonder that there should be any need of any Laws to forbid such Irregularities therein ; as we should wonder that any should make Laws strictly to forbid Men to burn their own Houses, to cut their own Flesh, to drink Poyson ; if we consider the Mischiefs that ensue upon our exceeding the Limits which God hath set us in these things, in impairing our Health, wasting our Estates, staining our Honour, breeding Discords in Families, depriving us of Reason, and turning us into Brutes ; exposing us sometimes to Man's Rage, sometimes to the Penalty of Humane Laws. In short, God hath not only provided for the Supply of our Necessities, but for our Delight and Comfort, *Psal. civ. 15.*

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Secondly, Religion allows a Man to enjoy and take Comfort in these Things which God hath given us, *Eccles. ii. 24, 25, 26. v. 18. ix. 7, 8, 9.* Yea, requires we should rejoice in them, *Deut. xii. 7. xii. 18. chap. xiv. 26. chap. xvi. 11, 14. chap. xxvi. 11.*

Thirdly, There is none can take more Pleasure in these things than a Christian : *Eccles. ii. 25.* Solomon might hasten as much as any to such Pleasure, not so much as he was a *King*, and had all things in abundance; but as he was a *good Man*, and in the Favour of God, *Eccles. ix. 7.* But this I have elsewhere touched, *SECT. IV. and SECT. VIII.*

If any account it hard to be restrained from *unnatural Pleasures*, I may say as *Joash of Baal*, *Judges vi. 31.* *Will you plead for these? He that will plead for these, let him presently be put to Death.* He that cannot content himself with *moderate Pleasures*, without *Excess*, let him go and learn of brute Beasts, that will not eat and drink to *Gluttony* and *Drunkenness*. He that cannot satisfy himself, unless he may wholly prostitute himself to Pleasure, and spend his whole Time therein; as if he were put into the World, as the *Leviathan* into the Sea, to play therein, *Psal. civ. 26.* let him learn of a Heathen, who would say, *He is not worthy the Name of a*
C *Man,*

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Man, that would spend a whole Day in Plea-
sure. So that Religion restrains us no
more in the use of Pleasures, than Na-
ture, Reason, or our own Interest re-
strains us; but rather teacheth us how
we may enjoy them more pure and re-
fined, without any Sting of Guilt, or
Check of Conscience, which may allay
the Sweetness of them.*



S E C T. VII.

*The Advantage which we have by Reli-
gion in respect of our Souls. First, In
being thereby restored to the Image
of God, and that Spiritual Beauty
which hath been defaced by Sin.*

I Now come yet nearer to our selves, to
that Divine part whereby we hold
Intelligence with the upper World, have
our Conversation in Heaven, with God
and Angels; to these, our Bodies are but
as a Box, a Case to a precious Jewel:
and the Advantages which I have hither-
to spoken of, are not worthy to be com-
pared with these that Godliness brings to
the Soul. And I will first speak of what
a godly Man hath thereby in *Enjoyment*
and *Possession*, then of what he hath in
Hopes and *Reversion*. And

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And I will begin with the Restoration of Man to the Condition from which he fell, or the *renewing of the Image of God in him*. To have seen that great Monarch, *Dan. iv.* in the greatest Glory, priding himself in his Majesty; and after to have seen him not only divested of his Glory, degraded from his Dignity, but deprived of his Reason, and putting on the Manners of Beasts of the Field, and conversing among them, would have moved a Man's Compassion; tho' he, it is likely, was no more sensible of his own Unhappiness, (being bereaved of Humanity) than those in the Fable, that being by the Enchantments of *Circe* turned into Beasts, disdained the Offer of *Ulysses* to have them restored to their former Shape; being debased in their Souls, as well as metamorphosed in their Bodies, and so not understanding the Felicity of the Rational Life; but such were the more to be pitied, by how much the less they could pity themselves. This is the Condition of Mankind. We are all of a good House, well descended, of a noble Stock, and Divine Original; but are fallen into Decay, have lost the Lustre of that Family from which we came, (being the Off-spring of God) and we are become like the Beasts which perish, *Psal. xlix. 21.* So some understand that Place, *Man be-*

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ing in Honour continueth not ; soon fell from his Estate of Dignity and Happiness, and became brutish in his Knowledge and Affections. Satan, that old Magician, by his Enchantments, hath bewitched us from that wherein we were at first created, into the Form of Beasts ; so that Men are become Lions, for Rage, Cruelty, Oppression ; Foxes, for Subtilty in Evil ; Swine, for Filthiness and Uncleaness ; Dogs, for Envy and Malice ; Wolves, for Rapine ; yea, as *the wild Asses Colt*, for Folly and Stupidity. The Scripture accounts it neither Incivility nor Calumny, to describe Men by such Compellations. Now it is only true Godliness, and that Regeneration, (which miserable Man doth as little understand, and as much despise, as those even now mentioned did the Offer of *Ulysses*) which must restore us to our former State. The Gospel (as a spiritual Charm) brings us to that Shape and Form which our first Parents lost. And tho' poor ignorant Men neither understand their Deformity, nor that Beauty of Holiness which adorns the Souls of those who are renewed according to the Image of God, (as the *Jews* despised Christ, and esteemed him not, as seeing no Form nor Comeliness in him, tho' he was to those who had a spiritual Discerning, and an Eye of Faith

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Faith to see that Divine Excellency and Perfection that was in him; the *chiefest of ten Thousand, and altogether lovely*) yet there is an inward Beauty of the Soul, obvious only to the Eyes of God, that regards *the hidden Man of the Heart*, and those who have a spiritual discerning to discern spiritual Things, which (as the Beauty of the outward Man consists in Colour, Proportion, and Perfection of Parts) stands in a due regard of every Faculty and Affection of the Soul to its proper Object, and a just Subordination to each other; the Superior irradiated by a Divine Light, to judge of every thing as the Matter requires, and accordingly to command the Inferior, which by an obsequious Subjection yields to the Authority, and executes the Commands of the Superior, (and is not like a Bone out of Joint, which is not subject to the Commands of the locomotive Faculty) and the whole tinged with a Divine Holiness, Justice and Goodness. It would be a sad Spectacle to behold a Man bowed together, that he could not look up; his Eyes closed up with filthy putrid Matter, his Lips black, and swelled as if they were poisoned; his Breath stinking, to the Offence of all that come near him; lame of his Feet, that he could not go, his Bowels hanging out; in a word, from

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Head to Foot full of Bruises and putrifying Sores: Thus is Man by Nature to the Eyes of God, bowed down to the Earth, minding earthly Things; his Understanding darkned, and the Eyes thereof closed by vile and corrupt Affections; his Lips breaking out with filthy Communication, as if the Poison of Asps were under them; his Throat like an open Sepulchre, sending forth such unsavoury Discourse, as is offensive to pure Ears; that knows not how to tread a right Step in the Way of God's Commandments; void of the Bowels of Pity and Compassion; and the Plague of his Heart (his natural in-bred Corruption) breaking forth daily into sinful Actions, which are as so many Bitches and Sores to render a Man loathsom in the Sight of God, to whom our inward Man is as naked and open, as our outward Man to the Eyes of Flesh. A Form of Godliness, and the Paint or Varnish of an outward Profession, may help to conceal some of this Deformity from the Eyes of Man; but it is only that *Fountain set open to the House of David, and the Inhabitants of Jerusalem to wash in, for Sin, and for Uncleaness*, that will restore to Man his primitive Soundness and Beauty, as *Naaman's* Flesh, by washing in *Jordan* was restored as the Flesh of a young Child. This is
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the immediate Effect of Regeneration; and tho' the Work is not perfected at once as to Degrees, yet it will be as the *Light that shines clearer and clearer till the perfect Day, we being transformed daily more and more into the Image of God, from Glory to Glory, by his Spirit.*



S E C T. VIII.

Tranquility of Mind the Privilege of the godly Man. A due ordering of the Affections, not a Stoical Apathy necessary thereto. Peace of Conscience unknown to the Heathen Philosophers, and attainable only by true Religion. Objections grounded on the Moroseness and inward Troubles of Christians, answered.

THE next Advantage of the Soul in this World by Godliness, is *Tranquility of Mind*, whereby a Man is exempted from the Importunity of inordinate Passions, and from the secret (tho' severe) Lashes of an accusing terrifying Conscience, which wound deeper than Scorpions. This the *Philosophers* cry up as the Sum of a happy Life; but what

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is said of Happiness in general, I may apply to this part of it : *Philosophy* seeks it, *Theology* finds it, but *Religion* possesseth it. As *Paul* told the *Athenians*, he declared unto them him whom they ignorantly worshipped : so the *Christian* discovers that which the *Heathen Moralist* blindly pursues : but it is only the godly *Man*, who hath his Soul thoroughly tinctured with true Grace, that enjoys this Tranquility ; and hereby I mean a sedate Calmness of Affections, whereby a Man is freed from the Terrors of an accusing Conscience, and from the *Impetus* and Violence of unruly Passions, which make him as the troubled Sea, casting up continually Mire and Dirt ; discovering in the Effects of such vile Affections, the Filthiness that lies deep in the bottom of their Hearts, so foaming out their own Shame. These Lusts (like the Devil in the poor Man, that cast him sometimes into the Fire, and sometimes into the Water, or made him cut himself with Stones) hurry Men with Violence, sometimes into one Extream, sometimes into another, and make them pierce themselves through with many Sorrows, and make dreadful Wounds and Gashes in their own Consciences ; rushing them into a thousand Dangers, as the unruly Horse doth the Rider into the Battle. But I have already said enough of

of the Diseases, Quarrels, and other Inconveniencies, that Mens Sins subject them to ; which are but the fulfilling of these importunate Lusts, which will never let a Man rest, but are continually soliciting for Satisfaction, and can never be satisfied, but enlarge themselves continually, as Hell ; and those fleshly Lusts do not only war *against* the Soul, but *in* the Soul against one another. This is our Unhappiness, that we must serve *divers* Lusts ; so that a Man is not only (as one compares him) like a Servant in an Inn, where there are many Guests, some calling with Importunity one way, some another, some up Stairs, some down ; but like those that live on the Frontiers of a Kingdom, bordering upon the Territories of another Prince, or betwixt two Garrisons in a Civil War ; his Service is required of both, he knows not whom to obey ; both require more Taxes than he knows how to pay : Thus is miserable Man tortured, while he is a Slave to his Lusts ; one calls one way, another calls another way ; *Pride* puts him upon one thing, *Covetousness* countermands ; *Sensuality* calls him another way ; *Pride* reclaims, and tells him, it will stain his Reputation, spot his Honour.

Now for freeing a Man from this basest Slavery, the Gospel is much more

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effectual than all the Precepts of Morality, as it more clearly lays before us the expresse Commands, and peremptory Will and Pleasure of the Sovereign Law-giver; as it enforceth these with Promises and Threatnings of such Things as there is either a deep Silence of amongst the Philosophers, or which at least they desire but at a great Distance, and seem to make some imperfect Discovery of; which the Gospel doth evidently demonstrate. And, which is more than all this, there doth a Spirit of Life and Power accompany the Gospel where it is received, which changeth the Soul into another Form; there is a divine Nature thereby communicated, whereby Men become as it were new Creatures, have new Thoughts, and new Affections; whereby they now favour the Things of the Spirit, as they did before the Things of the Flesh. The old Man is mortify'd by the Spirit; that, as in old Age *Desire fails*, (as we have a proof in *Barzillai*, that tasted not the Sweetness of the Creatures, as formerly) so when a Man's Lust are mortify'd, he hath not a Desire after forbidden Vanities, and the Pleasures of Sin, as formerly. Philosophy indeed hath one *Polemo* to boast of, (and he reclaimed only from those gross Extravagancies which the Light of Nature condemns, and which

which are destructive to Mens Honour and Interest) but the Gospel Thousands, whose Natures have been so changed by its Power, that they have become quite other Persons; and taken off from those more secret and spiritual Evils, which bring upon Men no present outward Inconvenience; which the Eye of Man cannot discover, nor the Hand of Man correct. And whatever Morality can furnish us with to perswade, the Gospel hath the same in greater Evidence, and much more. Besides, a Christian may more truly say of the Gospel, than one said of Philosophy, *He thereby learns to want what others enjoy*; not that any Man hath more Pleasure, or finds more Content in what he possesseth, than the Christian, that hath all sweeten'd to him by the Favour of God, and knows that it is not his only Portion; that it shall not be said to him, as to others when they die, *We to you, you have received your Consolation*; but he doth not disquiet himself with the Desire of more than God hath given him: And it is better to be content with a little, than to have much, and not to be satisfy'd: Better to enjoy perfect Health, and eat and drink no more than Nature requires, than to be troubled with the *Bodily*, or *Appetitus Caninus*, and be continually eating; or a *Droply*.

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Dropsy, and be always drinking. So for those natural Evils which are the Objects of our Fear and Sorrow, as they are future and foreseen, or present and felt, the Christian hath the Advantage of all others for bearing them ; not only as Hope, Patience, Meekness are the Fruits of the Spirit, which he works by that special Power and Energy which he puts forth in God's chosen ones ; but as the Gospel doth furnish him with Moral Arguments, much more effectual to perswade to Patience, than any that are learned in the Schools of the Philosophers ; as, *It is in vain to be troubled at what we cannot help : All Good hath a mixture of Evil, and all Evil hath a mixture of Good : There is a vicissitude of Fortunes, so that in Adversity a Man may hope that Prosperity will succeed : We should consider the Condition of others, who suffer the like Things with our selves : Bearing Afflictions, will harden us to undergo them better : (as Iron grows harder by being often heated in the Fire) Sometimes Injuries prove advantageous to those who suffer them.* These, and such-like rational Considerations may help to correct the Excess of Mens Passions ; but it is only the Gospel which discovers the Care and singular Love of God to his People in all the Evils that befall them ; he being with them, sympathizing with them, (so far

far as is consistent with his Happiness and Perfection) ordering all Things by his wise and powerful Providence, sitting as a Refiner, while he casts his Gold and Silver into the Furnace to purify it, ordering all Things for the good of his Chosen: This may make us not only patient in Tribulation, but to *glory* in it; not only to conquer in our Sufferings, but to be *more than Conquerors*.

Indeed all that assume to themselves the Title of Christians, enjoy not this *Tranquility*; for many arrogate this to themselves, which belongs not to them: Those that are Christians indeed, attain to this but by degrees, none are absolutely perfect in this Life; and perfect Peace of Mind is not an absolute freedom from all Passion, not an *Apathy*, but *Tranquillitas ordinis*, when every Affection keeps its own Place, and doth its proper Work. When *Fear* is the *Soul's Centinel*, to warn it of approaching Danger, that being forewarned it may be forearmed; when *Sorrow* is the *temper* of the Soul, or the Ballast of it, to keep it steady; *Anger* *Fortitudinis & ingenii*, the Mettle of it, to fit it for Action; and the *Oil of Gladness*, making the Face to shine; and being as Marrow to the Bones, making our Conversation more acceptable and agreeable unto others, and our
Life

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Life more pleasing and comfortable to our selves.

But that wherein a Christian hath the greatest Advantage, is *Peace of Conscience*: The importunate Sollicitations of Satan and our own Lusts to the Commission of Sin, are not so disquieting to the Soul, as the Rebukes and Clamours of Conscience after the Commission of it. The Devil is a meer *Trapan*, that draws Men into a Plot against Heaven; and when he hath ensnared them, is the first that accuseth them; sollicitates Men importunately to sin by the strongest Enticements, afterwards affrights their Consciences, by aggravating their Guilt to them; and this is a *Preoccupation of Hell*, as Peace of Conscience, and Joy in the Holy Ghost, is the First-fruits and Foretaste of Heaven. As *Vertue is its own Reward*, so Sin is its own Punishment; Guilt follows Sin, as the Shadow doth the Body, haunting the Sinner like a hideous Ghost, and continually terrifying him. It is true, many do not feel these Terrors; but it is not through any true settled Peace that they have, but only a senseless stupid Ignorance of their own Danger: They are like a Man asleep on the top of a Mast; do but awake them to see their Danger, and it is enough to affright them into the Infernal Abyss.

While

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While they go on quietly in Sin, they are but as a Man which hath brib'd the Serjeant, which doth not pay his Debt, nor secure him against Arrests; his Debt increases still, and he will have more to pay when he is arrested. It's not the Merchant's putting off the melancholy Thoughts of his Debts, by Pleasures and Divertifements, that will always quiet his Mind; he doth but beguile himself, and increase his Debt; it is the Acquittance of his Creditor that can only secure him. This is the Case of many, that when they are haunted, as *Saul*, by the evil Spirit of an accusing Conscience, as he had Musick to quiet his Mind, they must have something to divert their Thoughts from such disquieting and tormenting Objects; but these are but like *Opiates*, which may stupify for a time, and free from Pains, but do nothing to the Cure of the Disease. It is only the Blood of Christ that can *sprinkle our Hearts from an evil Conscience, cleanse our Consciences from dead Works*; only an effectual Faith that applies this Blood to the Conscience. So that the Heathen Philosophers by all their Prescriptions could never quiet the Consciences of Sinners; and all that Peace that they had, was only from Ignorance of the severe inexorable Justice of God, (which will
never

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never pardon Sin without Satisfaction, and never be satisfy'd but by the Sufferings of Jesus Christ) and the Nature of the Covenant of Grace, or the Condition of the Gospel, that none should have any Benefit by Jesus Christ, but those who are united with him by an effectual Faith, which produceth the Fruits of Holiness, in a blameless upright Conversation: So that as the Blood of Christ is the Cause of our Reconciliation with God, by Faith and Holiness we actually partake and are assured of the Fruits hereof; all these therefore are in several respects necessary to true Peace of Conscience. Morality therefore can never teach a right Way and Means of it, to which the Righteousness of Faith is an hidden Mystery. The loose prophane Christian can never attain it, while his Conversation is evidently inconsistent with that true Faith and Gospel Sincerity which is absolutely required of all that will be saved: And however they may flatter or cheat themselves into a vain Presumption, or shut their Eyes that they may not see their Danger, they are continually obnoxious to the affrights and alarms of such Places of Scripture, as affirm, *That without Holiness none shall see God; That if we live after the Flesh we shall die; That the Gate is strait, and*
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the Way narrow, that leads to Life, and there are few that find it ; That many shall seek to enter, and shall not be able ; That if any will be Christ's Disciple, he must deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow him ; That whoever says he knows God, and keeps not his Commandments, or that he hath Communion with God, and walks in Darknes, is a Lyar, and the Truth is not in him ; That whoever seems to be Religious, and bridleth not his Tongue, his Religion is vain ; That he that loves Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or House, or Lands, more than Christ, is not worthy of him. Besides others clearly importing, that a Man may have much Knowledge, and his Judgment so far convinc'd, as to approve of the best Things ; may be much in holy Duties, take delight in them, hear the Word with Joy, do many Things which he hears, be blameless as to his outward Carriage, and yet be an Hypocrite. So that without daily exercising our selves to Godliness, and a strict Watch over all our Ways, it is impossible to maintain a settled well-grounded Peace of Conscience.

If any object, that there are none more disquieted in their Consciences than those that make the greatest shew of Religion ; none more melancholick and morose in their Conversation : I may
answer,

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answer, *Solid Joy is a serious Thing*, (as *Seneca* could say :) it is not most seen in a forced Laughter and Jollity, which is as *Thorns under a Pot*, *Eccles. vii. 6.* that for the present make a great Noise and Blaze, but neither heat nor last : In the midst of it, the Heart, many times, is sorrowful, and the end of it is heaviness ; and, as the Heart knows its own Sorrow, the Stranger intermedleth not with its Joy. There is that Comfort within, which every one cannot observe. A godly Man needs not have his Heart revived with Wine, and strong Drink, and merry Company, like a sick Man, that is forced continually to have his Spirits kept up with Cordials ; he hath that within, which is better to him than Wine and Musick. It is true, Godly Men have more inward Conflicts in their Consciences than others ; but this proceeds from the Sense that they have of their own Danger ; as they say, *Wisdom arms Misery against itself* ; that is, discovering the Evils that we are obnoxious to, makes a Man more timorous and suspicious ; whiles Fools go on and are punished, without any fear of Danger ; go on as an Ox to the Slaughter, a Fool to the Stocks, a Bird to the Snare, and knows not that it is for her Life. It is time for a Man that knows, if he be not set upon the Rock that is high-
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er than himself, if he be not upon that sure Foundation, Jesus Christ, he hangs by the small Thread of a brittle Life, over the bottomless Pit, to look about him, and make his Calling and Election sure. Again, the greater Esteem any one hath of heavenly Things, the more careful he is to make sure of them, the more fearful to be deceived about them: (*Tarda solet magnis rebus in esse fides.*) And further, when Satan, who before kept all Things in Peace, sees himself in danger of being dispossessed, he rageth the more; as he rent the poor Man out of whom he was cast, almost to Death. And God gives him leave sometimes to winnow his dearest Children, for their Tryal. But for the most part, God leaveth them to such Disquietment of Spirit, and Terrors of Conscience, for some Sin which they have fallen into, (as in *David's Case*) and then their Trouble is not because of their Piety, but of their Defect in it. Or else it is before he intends to raise them to some great Eminency, or fill them with some extraordinary Joy; as we may observe, where Men have been raised exceeding high, their Foundation hath been laid very low in some deep Abasement; and so God brings them as a King out of Prison to reign; and ordinarily when God
lays

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lays his People low, either by extraordinary outward Afflictions, or inward Temptations, he doth recompense them for it by those inward Consolations which are the Fore-tastes of Heaven ; hence proceeds that Joy the Apostle speaks of, which is *unspeakable, and full of Glory* ; which he that hath tasted the sweetness of it would not want, to be exempted from all those Temptations and Tryals which he hath been exercised with. The Peace of wicked Men is but an *Agreement with Bell*, which shall be *disannulled* ; a *Covenant with Death*, which shall be broken, as the Mirth of a drunken Man, who whilst his Spirits are raised, feels not his Wounds, but afterwards feels the Smart of them, when his Reason returns to him. That will be the woful end of the carnal Man's security ; if he be laid in the Bonds or Fetters of Afflictions, and so come to himself, and feel the Wounds which he hath by Sin made in his own Conscience, he is a *Magor-missabib*, Terror round about : That is the reason of such Horror many times on sick Beds ; which yet is better than to be hush'd asleep by the charming Pleasures of Sin, and not awake till he be amidst the everlasting Flames. So that we may say with the Prophet, *The work of Righteousness is Peace, and the effect of Righteousness,*

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ousness, Quietness and Assurance for ever. It is only by the Righteousness of Jesus Christ, imputed to us by Faith, that we have Peace with God, and so Peace of Conscience, which is as a continual Feast, daily to entertain us ; as a brazen Wall, always to secure us ; that we may always find that within, wherewith we may solace our selves, and need not fear that any Thing shall disturb or disquiet the Tranquility which we have in our own Souls.



SECT.

S E C T. IX.

The Reward which godly Men have after this Life, the chief Advantage of Religion. The Excellency thereof demonstrated from Scripture, from the Satisfaction which the Angels have in it, from the Glory which wicked Men enjoy in this World, from the sweet Fore-tastes which godly Men have of it in this Life. Wherein it consists; the Glory of the Body, the Happiness of the Soul, in the Enjoyment of God, in Communion with the whole Number of perfected Saints, and that for ever.

ALL that I have hitherto said of the Advantage of Godliness, is little in respect of what remains to be spoken. The Estate of Man after this Life, is of more important Consideration. As it is usually said, there is no proportion betwixt finite and infinite, as there is betwixt two Things that are finite, though at the greatest distance in respect of their Natures, Quality, Quantity ; so there is a proportion between a *Minute* and a *Thousand Years*, and Minutes may easily be

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be multiply'd to such a Quantity ; but there is no proportion betwixt a *Thousand Years* and *Eternity*. So that if the Misery of Christians in this Life were answerable to wicked Mens Prejudice, and the Happiness of wicked Men answerable to their own Desires, and if both might live in these two different Estates a *Thousand Years* twice told ; yea, and suppose that after this Life wicked Men were to be happy to seven, and godly Men but to eight, (as the Philosophers speak of the Degrees of Heat and Cold) or that godly Men should be as miserable as wicked Men, abating only one Degree ; yet the Consideration of an *Eternity* would easily præponderate, in comparing the several States of these Persons. The Apostle saith, that *if in this Life only we have hope, we are of all Men the most miserable* : Not that a wicked Man hath more real Joy or Comfort in this Life than a godly Man ; but we must consider that the Apostle is disputing against such as deny'd the Resurrection, in a popular Rhetorical Style, wherein Words are not to be subjected to a rigid Interpretation, but to be expounded in a greater Latitude ; and it is usual in several Languages to express a Thing with a greater Emphasis by the *Superlative Degree* ; as if he had said, We are
very

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very miserable Men, if our Hope be only in this Life. Again, there may be an Emphasis in the *Pronoun, q. d. We*, who are the Off-scouring of all Things in the Eyes of the World, and have in these Times of Persecution run such Hazards, and quitted our worldly Enjoyments for the hopes of a glorious Resurrection, are miserably deceived, if there be no Resurrection. And further, though Christians have that inward Peace and Comfort in outward Tribulations, which doth more than counterbalance them, yet this Joy is in hope of the Glory of God, and but an Anticipation of that joyful Resurrection which hereafter they expect.

And now I shall come to speak something of the Certainty of it, of the Nature of it, and of the strictness of Holiness necessary to those who would enjoy it. And that we may raise our Thoughts to hold some proportion with the greatness of that Glory, though it be not possible for poor Mortals to have an adequate Conception thereof; *First*, Let us consider the great Things that God himself hath spoken of it, and how he hath throughout the Scripture propounded it as a sufficient and an abundant Recompence, for whatsoever we can do or suffer for him, in comparison wherewith all the

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the Afflictions of this Life are but light and inconsiderable. The Apostle tells us, *God is not ashamed to be called the God of his People, having prepared a City for them.* The Preparations that he hath made for them, are answerable to the Bounty and Munificence of such a Majesty ; though they here mourn whilst others rejoice, and though he here make them bear the Cross, whilst his professed Enemies abound in Pleasure and Prosperity. Now it would be much below the Greatness and Glory of such a Majesty, to boast of his own Gifts above the real worth of them, and flatter Men into his Service by possessing them with high Expectations of great Matters, which the Enjoyment of will not answer the Hopes which God himself hath drawn us into. And we may be most secure, that he will not give such Advantage to any Creature to enter into Judgment with him. Now let us consider what some of us have seen in the Interviews, perhaps of Princes, the Coronation, or Marriage of Kings, or on other Occasions ; yet we have heard of more than we have seen. We have heard of the Glory of *Solomon*, and many other great Princes, exceeding what our Times have to boast of ; and yet we can enlarge our Thoughts to something above these, and let our Minds

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wander into the four Corners of the Earth, to fetch in the Glory and Splendor of the World, to make up to our selves an *Idea* of Happiness. And yet when we have framed such an *Utopia*, such an imaginary Glory, God (who is too great, and too good, to deceive poor Mortals) hath given us to understand, that his Preparations for his Saints are somewhat above all this, and that Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, nor the Heart of Man conceived what he hath laid up for those that love him.

In the next place, let us consider, that it is the blessed State of Angels, which are first of more enlarged Capacities than Men, and yet they find a perfect Felicity therein. We should not make a Judgment of the State and Magnificence of a Prince's Court, by the Reports of some poor Peasant, who (we might easily imagine) would be ready to admire any Thing which he should see above the Pomp of his Landlord's House, where he used perhaps to labour, or go sometimes to pay some poor Rent; but we should more easily believe some noble Courtier of a more raised Mind, or some Ambassador that hath seen the Pomp of several Princes Courts, and knows what belongs to State and Greatness. It had been no great Matter to have heard Paul
boast

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boast of what he saw in Paradise, who was carry'd from these poor Cottages of Clay, to the Court of Heaven; like *David* from the Sheepfold to *Saul's* Court. But the Angels continually adoring the Glory of their King, and singing perpetual *Hallelujahs* to him, doth easily persuade that the Glory of the Celestial Court is far above what mortal Eyes ever saw. And besides the enlarged Capacities of Angels, we may consider that they are incorporeal, so that these corporeal Delights and Pleasures, which we have the most clear and lively apprehension of, make up none of their Happiness; but, besides such Delights, which it's likely we shall not want in Heaven, there are more pure and spiritual Delights, enough to make an Angel happy; which we can scarce conceive any Thing of.

A further Consideration, which may argue the Happiness of that future State is the Greatness and Glory of many wicked Men here in this World. Let us but consider, how the great Ones of the Earth, many of which have been wicked Men, do bathe themselves continually in Rivers of Pleasure, and enjoy for many Years together whatever their Hearts can wish; and what we ordinarily see great Ones now enjoy, is little to the

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Glory of a *Belpazzar*, a *Darius*, an *Alexander*, a *Nero*, the *Grand Signior*, the *Kings of China*; and yet all this is but as the Crumbs that fall from the *Childrens Table*. What then can we imagine them to be fed with? These are but the spillings, or the overflowings of his Bounty to his very Enemies; how great then is that which he hath reserved for those, to whom he hath purposed to shew the exceeding Riches of his Grace, to give the World a Proof of his Bounty and Glory? As a Prince that would make an Entertainment for Ostentation, and shew his great respect to some of his special and most beloved Friends. We read often in Scripture, of the Preparations that God hath made for his Saints; which is but a metaphorical Expression of the Greatness of that Glory which he hath ordained them to; as those Entertainments which Men do long prepare for, do far exceed what they on a sudden make, being unawares surprized by the coming of their Friends.

I will yet add another Proof of the Greatness of that Glory which we hope for, taken from the Fore-tastes which many have of it here, which hath made them glory in Tribulations, triumph in the Flames, and not only abated, but wholly taken away the Sense of the most

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exquisite Torments; that some *Martyrs* have felt no more in the Fire: than if they had been in a Bed of Roses. Some after long Conflicts and Terrors, have had such ravishing Joys, that they have cry'd to God to hold, they could bear no more. If such Glimpses have so ravish'd them, what is the full View and clear Vision? Let us imagine a Confection, the least Drop of which distilled into a draught of Gall, or Wormwood, or whatever else can be supposed to be more bitter and distasteful, should wholly alter the Taste of it, making it most pleasing and delicious; how sweet would a full Draught of it be, without the least Mixture of any thing distasteful and unpleasing? So, if such Drops of spiritual Joys are able to sweeten the bitterest Cup of Afflictions, what shall we think of bathing our selves, and drinking our fill in those Rivers of Pleasure at God's Right-Hand for evermore, without the least Mixture of any Sorrow or Trouble to allay the Sweetness thereof?

I have hitherto in general shewed, that the *Glory of Heaven* is like to be very great and inconceivable, much more inexpressible; but I have not yet attempted to shew what it is, or wherein it consists; and while I say it is not to be express'd, if I should go about to set it

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forth fully, there would be *Contradictio in terminis*; so that all I dare pretend to, is some rude delineation of that State of Happiness. Man is made up of two essential Parts, Soul and Body: Now though the Soul be the more noble Part, yet doubtless the Body shall have its Share in this Felicity. If God hath so far honoured them, as to make them the *Temples of the Holy Ghost*, and given Christ a Charge that he should lose *nothing* of what he hath given him, but raise up our scatter'd Dust at the Last Day, *Joh. vi. 39.* he hath certainly reserved a Reward for that which hath had so great a Share in our Sufferings here; and he hath told us in general, that he will, by his Divine Power, *change our vile Bodies, and make them like his glorious Body.* But sure, as we approach nearer to the Nature of God in our Souls, so they shall have the greatest Share of future Glory; and in general, it shall be with the Glory wherewith Christ was glorify'd from Eternity, and after his Suffering; and this shall be by the *Enjoyment of God, which is the acting of the perfected Faculties and Affections of our Souls upon him.* Every Sense hath its proper Object, in the Enjoyment of which it takes Complacency according to the suitableness of the Object thereto; and according to the Nature of the Object,

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Object, and the Capacity of the Sense for receiving it, or acting upon it, such is the Pleasure that it finds therein; and the more noble the Faculty and the Object are, the more noble is the Delight which ariseth from the Union betwixt them; so that all Philosophers are agreed, that intellectual Delights exceed sensual Pleasures. Now in Heaven our Souls shall be perfected according to the Capacity of a finite Being; otherwise they would be no more capable of enjoying God, than a deaf Man, of being delighted with Musick, or a blind Man in the most perfect Beauty; therefore we are said to be made meet to be Partakers of an Inheritance with the Saints in Light; Sanctification qualifying us naturally for Heaven, as Justification doth morally: And God himself shall be the Object of our Happiness, whom we shall see as he is, and love him, and delight in him according to his Goodness and Glory. I know it is hard for us to conceive what it is to enjoy God; but to help us in the Conception of it, let us consider a little what it is to enjoy a Friend: To have an absent Friend, is a Comfort; but to be with him, is a great addition to our Contentment, to receive the Expressions of their Love, and to testify ours to them. Those who are of a more noble and generous

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nerous Completion, find more true Satisfaction herein, than in whatever else this World can afford them: And what is it that endears another to us, but *Love* and *Loveliness*? Where there are amiable Endowments in Persons of Worth, they command an Esteem from us, though they know us not, and though we are never the better for them; but where they have a particular Affection for us, take us into their Bosom, make us of their entire Friends, this doth much more endear them to us. Now, (as I have already said) we find in God, in a far more eminent Degree, that which renders the Creatures amiable and lovely. Besides his *Goodness* towards the whole Creation, which the Earth is full of, his special Favour to Mankind, and it may be to us above many Thousands of others; the *exceeding Riches of Grace* towards the *Elect*, which Men and Angels shall admire to the Days of Eternity; there is that *Beauty* (that is, intellectual Beauty, or such Beauty as is objected to the Understanding) which will ravish the whole intellectual Creation. His *Wisdom* is unsearchable, his *Power* irresistible, and his *Grace* and *Clemency* as far exceeding what is to be found in the Creature, as his *Majesty* and *Glory*. *Job* had heard of God; but when he came to see him, abhorred him.

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himself to see the infinite Distance betwixt the Sovereign Creator, and a poor Mortal, that durst dispute the Case with him. Oh! what Thoughts shall we have of God, when we come to see him as he is? What Astonishment will seize upon us? What Confusion will cover us, when we see what a God it is, whose Grace we have so oft despised, whose Patience we have so long abused, whose Authority we have so boldly contemned; and yet see, that he who had us always at his Mercy, and could at his Pleasure avenge himself on us, should pardon us for his own sake, and make such glorious Preparations for us? We shall then perfectly understand all the Dimensions of his Love, and continually as it were read the Stories of it. We may the better conceive of it, by fancying to our selves what a singular Favour it would be, to have some great Prince take a singular Affection to us, though we did the least of any in the World deserve it, and had disoblighd him by a thousand Provocations; if he should take us home to his House, and maintain us always at his Table, keep us always in his Presence, this would fall infinitely short of that Love which God will manifest to us: And what an addition will it be to our Happiness, to see him

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in his Glory, who hath loved us, and washed us from our Sins in his Blood? The Story of whose Love we have so oft read over, a sight of whose Face, tho' but through the Glass of Faith, we have so oft, so long desired and lamented after; to have the Society of the innumerable Company of Angels, and the general Assembly of just Men made perfect, a Meeting of the Saints of all Ages and Places, and these perfected both in Grace and Glory, so that they shall have no Infirmities, no Pride, Ignorance, Self-seeking, to exercise our Charity or Patience; no Sufferings to move our Pity or Compassion; and we shall never need to disquiet our selves with the Thoughts of such sad Parting as *Paul* had, *Acts* xx. 39. We shall keep an everlasting Holy-Day, the Marriage of the Lamb shall be for ever celebrated by all his Friends: And as *Eternity* will perpetuate our Happiness, and make it the greater *Extensive*; so the Assurance and Consideration hereof will heighten it, and make it greater *Intensive*; and every Moment of our Felicity will be more sweet to us, in that we shall never be disquieted with the Thoughts that our Condition (as happy as it is) will one Day have an End.

S E C T. X.

The necessity of Holiness to Salvation, proved by many plain Scriptures, Objections answered. The Imprudence. of being but formal half Christians, and the Advantages that strict serious Christians have above such.

THERE is yet another Consideration which will much enhance the Glory of Heaven ; but before I come to speak of that, I must shew how necessary an holy Conversation is to the enjoyment of it.

Many have entertained a Suspicion, that some morose Men, peevishly envious against the Happiness and Contentment of Mankind, and too superstitiously Precise, would lay upon them a Yoke which neither they nor their Fathers were able to bear ; confining their Liberty to too narrow Bounds, and frightening them from Religion, by exacting so much strictness and severity. Now that I may not seem to any to make the Way to Heaven more narrow than God hath made it, I will but set down the plain Words of God himself. Not to speak of what those have attained to, who yet are plain.

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plainly declared to be under the Sentence of Condemnation, and in a State of Wrath; I shall only instance in some Places where the Scripture sets down what is indispensibly necessary to Salvation, or what doth plainly argue a Man to be in the State of Damnation. *Matth. v. 20. I say unto you, that except your Righteousness exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, (who yet went a great way in the Profession of Religion, and in both Moral and Ceremonial Righteousness) you shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven* Cap vi. 20. *Where your Treasure is, there will your Heart be also.* Cap. vii. 13. *Enter ye in at the strait Gate, for wide is the Gate, and broad is the Way that leads to Destruction, and there be many which go in thereat; but strait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way that leads to Life, and few there be that find it.* Verse 21. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven.* Cap xii. 36. *Every idle Word that a Man shall speak, he shall give an account thereof in the Day of Judgment.* Cap. xvi. 24. *If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me.* Mark viii. 38. *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my Words in this adulterous and sinful Generation, of him also*

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also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes into the Glory of the Father with his Angels. Luke xiii. 24. Strive to enter in at the strait Gate; for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able. John iii. 5. Except a Man be born of Water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. Rom. viii. 9. If any Man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Verse. 13. If ye live after the flesh ye shall die. 2 Cor. v. 17. If any Man be in Christ, he is a new Creature. Gal. v. 6. For in Christ Jesus neither Circumcision avails any Thing, nor Uncircumcision, but Faith that worketh by Love. Cap. vi. 7, 8. Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a Man soweth, that shall he also reap: For he that soweth to his Flesh, shall of the Flesh also reap Corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap Life Everlasting. Heb. xii. 14. Follow Peace with all Men, and Holiness, without which no Man shall see the Lord. Jam. ii. 19, 20. Thou believest there is one God, thou dost well: The Devils also Believe and Tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain Man, that Faith without Works is dead? 1 Pet. iv. 18. If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the sinner and the ungodly appear? 1 John i. 6. If we say we have Fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the Truth. Cap. ii. 4. He that saith I know him,

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him, and keepeth not his Commandments, is a Lyar, and the Truth is not in him. I might add many like Words out of the Scripture of Truth; but it may be these are enough to make many say, Who then can be saved? But let God be true, whatever becomes of Man; and it is that which hath been told us, that few find the narrow Way that leads to Life.

If any object the Failings of such as *David* and *Peter*; the same Scriptures that tell them, tell us of their Repentance and bitter Tears. If any wonder how this should be consistent with the Mercy of God; I answer, there are other Objects whereon he sheweth the Riches of his Mercy, even the small Remnant that shall be saved. And when we come to see (at the last Day) the evil of Sin, the Holiness of God, the Preparations which God hath made for Sinners, we shall rather admire that he should save any, than no more. And if the Pardon of Sin were such a light Matter, that God should be charged with Severity, if he hearkens not to the Cries of Sinners, which Necessity doth at last force them to, he might have spared the Trouble (as I may take Liberty to speak) of sending his Son; yea, (as I may further say) spared his glorying of his unconceivable Love in giving Christ to die for Sinners; and it is an ignorant

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rant Conceit, to think that such a strict Exaction of Holiness straitens the Grace of the Gospel, when it is much of the Grace we receive by Christ, to be turned from our Iniquities, *Acts* iii. 26 *Rom.* vii.

1, &c. The End of our Redemption is to be a peculiar People zealous of good Works, *Tit.* ii. 14. The chief Article of the Covenant of Grace is to have the Law of God written in our Hearts, *Heb.* viii. 9. Our chief Glory, to be like our heavenly Father in Holiness, *1 Pet.* i. 15. The great Advantage we have by the Promises, to be made Partakers of the divine Nature, *2 Pet.* i. 4. So that let Men flatter themselves with vain Presumptions, and delude their own Souls by drawing their Desires into Opinion, and from wishing they might have Peace though they go on in the Ways of their own Hearts, proceed to believe that it will be so: *These Words will certainly take hold of them, Zach.* i. 6. and judge them at the last Day.

I may further add, that it is the greatest Imprudence for Men to be but half Christians, or to make some Profession of Religion, and not to strive to attain to some Perfection in it; both as the Reflection on such an Indifferency or Lukewarmness will be an Aggravation of Mens Misery, while they shall think with themselves

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selves they were near to the Kingdom of Heaven, and were shut out because they went not a little farther; they were fair for striking a Bargain for the *Rich Pearl*, and yet parted for a small Matter. As if a Merchant should go near to *Peru*, or some other Place where there is Gold in Abundance, and through a sluggish lazy Stupidity, come back Empty; or as if *Columbus*, when he was near to the Coasts of *America*, should have been forced through the Mutiny of his Soldiers, to return and lose the Honour and Advantage of his Enterprize. It is pity to run a Race, and lose the Prize through Negligence, when we come within a few Steps of the Goal. If we will do any thing in Religion, let us go through with it, and not lose the future Reward of it, which is most considerable, through Slothfulness.

And it is farther to be considered, that those who are but half Christians and Smatterers in Religion, know nothing of of these spiritual Comforts, that Delight in Communion with God in his Ordinances, Joy in the Holy Ghost, which those who are truly godly have Experience of: Those who are but Smatterers or Bunglers in any Art, Science, Trade, find them difficult, when they are easy and delightful to those who are Masters
of

of them, and throughly understand them; as the wise Man saith, *Knowledge is easy to him that understands.* As there is great difference in the reading of a *Classick* Author by the *Master* and the *Scholar*; the *Scholar* looks upon it as a great Task to construe it, and is glad when it is over, not minding the things themselves expressed by the Words; while the *Master*, who minds the Matter, and understands it well, is transported with Pleasure to observe the *Elegance of Style, Height of Fancy, Depth of Judgment, Strength of Reason, Subtily of Wit, Candor of Mind*, which is in the Author. So, while a Man is but a Christian in Name, and hath but a Form of Godliness, the Exercises of Religion are a burthen to him, and he doth them only as a Task to escape Hell-fire, as a School boy gets his Lesson to escape the Rod: But he that is a Christian indeed, finds that Sweetness in the Word of God, that it is to him as *Honey and the Honey-comb, the joy and rejoycing of his Soul.* He is glad when he can steal an Opportunity to Pray, he finds so much Comfort in Communion with God therein; and can say with Christ, it is *his Meat to do the Will of his heavenly Father*: And the Testimony of his Conscience is to him as a *continual Feast*, and makes the Practice of Holiness more pleasant to him,

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him, than all the Delights of Sin are to a wicked Man. And as it is in Trading, he that doth not thoroughly understand his Trade, cannot make his best Advantage of it to thrive by it, and so grows weary of it, or turns bankrupt; when he that is well seen in the Mystery of it, and knows how to improve every Opportunity of Gain, and so finds the Benefit of it, makes a Pleasure of his Business, and will not be perswaded to leave it off: So he that is but a Christian in *Shew*; and finds not that real Advantage which others do of a strict walking with God, nor any return of his formal heartless Prayers, grows weary of Religion, and at length it may be casts it off; while the real serious Christian, by the rich returns of his sincere and fervent Prayers, and the Benefit which he finds by a close walking with God, is so confirmed in his holy Profession, that nothing shall make him cast it off, or think it a Burthen.



SACR.

S E C T. XL.

The Misery of wicked Men after this Life, demonstrated from Scriptures; from the Sufferings of godly Men here in this World; from Terrors of Conscience in Good and Bad; from the Devils trembling at the thoughts of it, which they have not so much Reason for as Man. The Punishment of Loss, with the Aggravations of it. The Punishment of Sense exquisite, without Allay or Intermission, without End.

I Shall now proceed to that other Consideration, which will make the Happiness of Heaven much greater; yea, which considered apart, doth much commend the Excellency of Holiness, and clearly demonstrate how much it is the Interest of Mankind to follow after it: *damnum emergens*, is as much to be considered as *lucrum cessans*. We should not only consider the Reward of Holiness, but the Wages of Sin: If a Sinner could cease to be, or might be annihilated when he dies, or if there were any State between Heaven and Hell, our Plea would have less Force: But there will be but two Ranks of Men at the last Judgment, where-

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whereof one shall go into *eternal Life*, the
other into *everlasting Punishment*, *Matth.*
xxv. 46.

Now I shall use the same Method in
considering this State of ungodly Men
after the end of the World, which I fol-
lowed in considering the State of holy
Men. First giving some general Demon-
strations of the Misery of it, then some
particular Reasons why it will be so in-
tolerable.

As first, the Glory of Heaven may be
imagined to be exceeding Great, by the
Preparations which God is said to have
made for it : So by the same *Anthropopa-*
thy we may conceive of the Misery of
Hell, God being said to prepare the Pu-
nishment of the Damned, *Matth. xxv. 41.*
It is said indeed, it is *prepared for the De-*
vil and his Angels ; but wicked Men shall
be Co heirs with them of the same Mi-
sery. He is laying up his *Pile of Fire*
and Wood, *Isa. xxx. 33.* And laying Sin-
ners as Stubble in the Sun to dry, that
the eternal Flames may prey more furi-
ously upon them, *Nahum. i. 10.* Suffer-
ing them to *fill up the Measure of their*
Iniquity, and so to treasure up to themselves
Wrath against the Day of Wrath, that they
may be *fit for Destruction.*

Let us in the next Place consider what
godly Men have suffered in this Life ;
read

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read but the *Martyrologies*, and see the dreadful Torments that the Martyrs have suffered, enough to make one tremble at the reading of them: And if these Things be done to the green Tree, those who are the Objects of God's Love, and dear unto him as the Apple of his Eye, such on whom he hath determined to shew the Riches of his Mercy; what will be done to the dry, with whom he is angry every Day, and on whom he will shew the Power of his Wrath? If Judgment begin at the House of God, what will be the end of those that obey not the Gospel?

Further, let us consider the Terrors of Conscience which godly Men have suffered in this World, when they have had lively Apprehensions of the displeasure of God against them. If his Rebukes have made them consume as a Moth fretting a Garment; if his Frowns have distracted them, and made them roar through the disquietness of their Spirit; What will it be for his Jealousy to smite, and his Wrath to burn like Fire for ever? Again, let us consider what Horrors wicked Men have felt in their Consciences in this Life, which are but the Foretastes of that Misery which they shall endure for ever. Read but the Stories of *Vaninus*, *Spira*, &c. who have died in despair: If such drops of Wrath let fall like scalding Lead upon the Soul, have

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have so hideously amazed and terrified, surely it is dreadful and astonishing to be cast into the Lake that burns with Fire and Brimstone for ever. And though there be many now can harden themselves against God, and think by a *Stoical Apathy* to bear whatever God can inflict; yet some have found the beginnings of Hell in their Consciences, worse a Thousand Times than all the Torments which the Cruelty of Tyrants or incarnate Furies could ever invent. And whereas some may think (with *Spira*) that the Expectation of future Misery, is worse than the suffering of it, it is a wide Mistake; for according as Man feareth, so is his Anger, Psal. xc. 11. Ordinary Calamities indeed are for the most Part worse feared than felt; but when a Man hath raised his Mind to the most dreadful and amazing Apprehensions of the Displeasure of God, and the Severity of his Vengeance, he cannot reach the Vastness of it; there is yet a *plus ultra*, somewhat further, as it is in our Apprehensions of the Glory and Happiness of Heaven: And at the last Day, the great and mighty Men of the World, who have set the Judgments of God far above out of their Sight, and scorned his Threats, as a meer *brutum fulmen*, or a *Mormo* to fright Children and superstitious Fools, would be glad,
if

if they knew how, to run under the Rocks and Mountains to hide themselves from the terrible Majesty of their Judge; and (to allude to the Words of *St. Paul*, 2 *Cor.* x. 11.) let such think that as God is now in his Word when he seems to be absent from them, such will he be also indeed, when he shall manifest his Presence and his righteous Judgment. We begin to think meanly of all whom we can see through, or go about; it is Incomprehensibleness that commands a Veneration; and that we shall always find in God; both as to the Glory of his Grace, and as to the Greatness of his Power and Wrath.

Let us yet go a step further, and consider the Apprehensions which the *Devils* have of this Condition, (for they and wicked Men (as was before observed) are Fellow-Heirs of the same Misery) and these tremble at the Thoughts of it, that is, have dreadful amazing Apprehensions at the Expectation of it; the *Consequent* in that Place being put for the *Antecedent*, according to the usual *Phrasology* of Scripture; they seem not to have so much Reason to be troubled at the Thoughts of it as Men have; their Sins perhaps may have some Aggravations, which the Sins of Man have not; yet I think there is nothing can aggravate it so as the Contempt of the Gospel, which they

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they are not guilty of. They had not a Board after Shipwrack, whereon they might have saved themselves, if it had not been their own Fault. Again, they have no Bodies to be tormented, as we have. Many cannot apprehend how the Soul should be capable of any considerable Torment; and they think they could laugh at any Punishment that could be inflicted on the Soul, were it not for Bodily Sufferings, which they have a clearer Apprehension, and more lively Sense of: But, besides all that we are capable of suffering in our Bodies, we are capable of suffering the same in our Souls, which the Devils are said to tremble at the Belief of. But it is with us, as it is with little Children, who are pleased perhaps with the Pomp of their Fathers or Mothers Funeral, and proud of their mourning Cloaths, but are not sensible of their own Loss; when those that are grown up to Years of Reason and Judgment, wring their Hands to think of what sad Consequence such a Loss will be to them. And in this respect it is said, *Wisdom arms Misery against it self.* We glory in that which is our Shame, and the Cause of our Misery, while the Devils tremble, who know what it is to lose Heaven, (having been already in it) and know what Hell is, because they have felt

felt it; they certainly believe these Things, having more understanding to apprehend the clear Demonstrations of the Truth of them; they have their Minds more fixed on these Things, which are the Matter of their Torment, being more in *Act* and less in *Power* than we are. We know not now what it is to lose God and Heaven; but we shall know, when we shall see them, not to *enjoy* them, but to *envy* them. We are ready to flatter our selves into Hopes, that these Things may not be true; or our Thoughts are ordinarily diverted to other Things. And the Devil keeps that out of our Minds, which he knows not how to keep out of his own, lest considering well of it, we should be induced thereby to Believe, and so obtain Salvation, *Luke viii. 14.* For a Conclusion of these general Demonstrations, I might add Christ's importunate pressing of Men to flee from the Wrath come, though through so many Hardships and Difficulties which he calls them to: He wept over Sinners, and was grieved for the hardness of their Hearts, as sometimes *Jeremy* was, or as *Aidanus*, a good Man in this Nation, wept to think of the Miseries that were coming upon it. Sinners go on carelessly and securely, *like an Ox to the Slaughter,* or *a Fool to the Correction of the Stocks;* but

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Christ

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Christ passionately pleads with them, to divert them from their own Ways, knowing how little they consider the Misery of those devouring Flames, which they are casting themselves into.

Now for proving more particularly, that this Misery which ungodly Men shall endure, is very sad and dreadful: First, we shall not only know (as I before intimated) the Worth of that Glory which we have lost, but we shall be convinced that we have lost it thro' our own Fault. Many think now to harden themselves at the Day of Judgment against God, and impeach him of Rigour and Injustice, if he should doom them to an eternal Hell; but then when their Consciences are awakened, they will own their Guilt, and say as *Judas, I have sinned, Matth. xxvii. 4.* Though he did nothing but by the *determinate Counsel and Fore-knowledge of God*, and that which *Satan had put into his Heart, John xiii. 2. A&. ii. 23.* And it will be an Aggravation of Mens Misery, that they should lose Heaven through their own Carelessness, and exchange it for a Trifle. Should a Man have a dear Wife dangerously Sick, and give her Poyson to kill her, instead of Physick to cure her, meerly through his own Negligence, surely he would bury himself with her, when
he

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he should see his own Oversight : Or should he in a drunken fit stab his Children, certainly his first Work, after he should come to himself again, would be to stab himself. But what are these to our Souls, our *Darlings*, our only Ones? *Psal.* xxii. 10. which we wound worse than the poor Lunatick Man, that cut himself with Stones. We shall come to ourselves ; and have far different Apprehensions of all Things, as soon as our Souls look out of these dark Prisons of our Bodies, and begin to see by the Light of another World. A Child that should have the Writings of a fair Estate, and sell them for Trifles, looking but upon the bulk of Paper or Parchment, not regarding the Contents of them, and afterwards when he comes to be a Man, should live in Disgrace and Misery, while he sees another bear high in the World with his Estate, would bewail too late his own childish Vanity : But what is this to our selling of our Hopes of Heaven for the Pleasures of Sin, in the midst of which *the Heart is sorrowful, and the End of which is heaviness* ? Regarding the Gospel no more than a Story out of *Pliny*, looking on the Scriptures but as waste Papers. *Cleopatra's* Prodigality in drinking a little Pearl at one Draught, was nothing to ours. We were never

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put to it, as *Lyfimachus*, to loose a Kingdom, and subject our selves to perpetual Slavery for a draught of Water. Oh! with what Indignation shall we reflect upon our own Folly and Madness, when we shall have Time and Occasion to settle these Things in our Hearts! We shall need no Devils to torment us, no Fire to burn us; our own Consciences will continually scourge us, and we shall for ever be our own Tormentors, when we shall be awakened to *smite upon our Thigh*, and say, *what I have done?*

There will be yet a further Punishment of Sense; the Scripture calls it *Fire and Brimstone*; which if we understand literally, and in a proper Sense, we may easily imagine the dreadfulnes of such a Punishment, or at least learn to understand it by holding our Hand in a hot Furnace but for one Minute: And this is Fire, which shall not suddenly devour or annihilate us (as some imagine) but prey eternally upon Men, and never consume them. *The Beast and the false Prophet shall be tormented Night and Day for ever and ever*, Revel. xx. 10. Otherwise the Devils, with whom (as I have observed) we shall share in the same Misery, would rather rejoyce, than tremble at the Thoughts of the last Judgment, if they should then be presently reduced
to

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to nothing. See more of this in *Austin De civitate Dei, lib. xx. cap. 10.* But if we understand this figuratively, or metaphorically, then certainly God hath chosen that which is the most exquisite Pain which we can conceive of, to set forth something else, which we know not how otherwise to frame a Notion of in our Minds, and which doth as far exceed such sensible Things as are used to express it, as the Glory of Heaven doth exceed all that Glory which is borrowed from the Creatures to express it to our weak imperfect Understandings. Further, this Punishment will be without any Allay: In Hell there is pure Darkness; there will not be a drop of Water allowed to refresh in those raging Flames; and Company, which some talk of, will but encrease Mens Torments. And as there will be no Allay, so no Intermission, no *lucida intervalla*: As there will be no *Night of Darkness* in Heaven, so there will be no *Night of Rest* in Hell. And to compleat the Misery of that Condition, there will be no End of it. Eternity will make their Misery perpetual; but the Belief and Consideration of Eternity, will make it insupportable, and swallow Men up in a hideous Despair: they shall be like Men tossed in the midst of the Sea, the Waves rolling one after another. If

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he could see any Land behind those proud Surges, there might be some Hopes; but to see nothing but the vast Ocean, and the Waves swelling higher and higher, and raging against him like a Giant, this is that which amazeth him: And such will the Thoughts of Eternity be then to miserable Sinners, when lifting up their Heads to see if they can descry any End of their Misery, they shall see thousands of Ages multiplying themselves to Infinity, and there will be no Remedy left, but they must sink down into an everlasting Despair; neither will time or suffering at all alleviate their Misery, as the Poet saith of those, who by enduring Poverty make it at length more easy to born: As our multiplied Thoughts of the Happiness of Heaven, will not cloy and weary, but increase our Pleasure and Fruition; so will our Thoughts of Torment, more enrage those eternal Flames which shall burn within us, and make that burning Furnace glow more and more; that as the duration of Mens Misery draws it forth *Extensively*, so it will also aggravate it *Intensively*, till it come to that Extremity, beyond which there can be imagined no Degrees to which it may be further heightened.

S E C T.

S E C T. XII.

How much Religion conduces to the Good of Humane Societies. And first, of Families, prescribing such Rules to all therein, as well observed, would make them Happy in each other.

IF thou be Wise, thou shalt be Wise for thy self, saith the wisest of Men, Prov. ix. 12. He that hath the Fear of God, which is the beginning, or chief and principal of all Wisdom, doth (as is evident from what has been said already) best provide for himself, and consult his own sovereign Good : And indeed God hath out of his abundant Goodness to Mankind, so twisted and interwoven their Happiness with his own Glory in the Business of our Salvation, that while they best serve him, they do most advantage themselves ; and according as they seek his Glory, they promote their own Happiness. But yet we are not born for our selves; but as every Member should do its Office for the common Good of the whole Body, so every Man should, as a Member of the Universe or Community, stand the Whole in some

E 4.

Stead.

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Stead, and not be as a *Wen* or a *Wolf*, a Disease or Deformity only, drawing away Nourishment from the Body, without doing it any Service ; being an unprofitable Burden of the Earth, *living undesired, dying unlamented.*

Wherefore I will now come to consider *Man* as a *sociable Creature*, and as he stands in relation to others ; and so we shall find that a good *Man* is a common Good, and that Religion and Holiness doth not only make Men *Tzadikim*, or *Just*, but *Chafidim*, or *Good*, for which (if for any) Men will venture their Lives, *Rom. v. 7.*

And first, I shall consider *Men* in an *Oeconomical State* ; Families being the first in order among the Societies of Men ; others being made up of a Conjunction or Combination of several Families, as Families are made up of several Persons. Now in Families there is a threefold Society :

- | | | |
|----------------------|--|------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Conjugal</i> | $\left. \begin{array}{c} \text{BETWEEN} \\ \text{DE} \end{array} \right\}$ | <i>Husband and Wife.</i> |
| 2. <i>Paternal</i> | | <i>Parents and Children.</i> |
| 3. <i>Despotical</i> | | <i>Masters and Servants.</i> |

Though all these be not found in every Family, yet they are all found in some, and some in all. And let us but consider the Rules prescrib'd to all these by Christ in

in the Gospel, and we shall see a perfect draught of *Oeconomicks*, and the most exact Patern of an happy well-governed Family. And if any professing Godliness do not come up to such Rules, what I have undertaken to prove holds Good in *Theft*; and it is not Mens Godliness, but their want of it, which is to be blamed; though we may find this amongst Christians, sooner than *Plato* find his *Common-wealth*, or the *Stoicks* their perfect Man.

For the *Conjugal Society*, *Husbands* are to love their *Wives* as themselves, as their own Bodies: yea, as Christ loved his Church, a Proof of which he gave in giving himself for it: So that he is to provide for her whatever is meet and necessary; not to be bitter against her; to be tender towards her; giving honour to her, by how much more honour God hath given to him; to instruct her in whatever is meet for her learn of him; and in a Word, to forsake all others in the World, and cleave only to her; reckoning her and himself no more two, but one Flesh. *Wives*, on the other Hand, are obliged to submit themselves to their Husbands, to reverence them, to obey them, diligently and frugally to manage the Affairs of their Family, and to ease their Husbands as far as may be of the

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burden of Cares that lies on them; and to carry themselves with that Prudence, Modesty, Chastity, Gravity, that they may be a Crown to their Husbands; that the Heart of their Husbands may trust safely in them, and that they may do them Good, and no Hurt, all their Days.

So in the *Paternal Society*, *Parents* are bound to take Care of the Souls of their Children, and to bring them up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord, to teach them the Way wherein they should walk, while they are Young; and to take Care of their Bodies also, providing for them, laying up Portions for them, and not to use too much Rigour and Severity towards them, so as to discourage them; yet to give them that moderate Correction, which the Vanity of Childhood and Youth many times makes necessary. So *Children* are to obey their Parents in all Things lawful; to honour and reverence them; to requite their Care of them, by maintaining them (if need require) in their old Age; concealing their Infirmities, and abstaining from all Expressions of Contempt and Disrespect.

In the *Despotic Society* *Masters* are obliged to exercise Humanity towards their Servants, not ruling them with too much

much Imperiousness or Rigour, considering they have a *Master* themselves likewise in Heaven, of whom they would not be dealt with in Strictness and Severity: They are to provide for them, to give them that which is just for their Service; yea, that which is reasonable and equal, rewarding Industry and Faithfulness with more than Servants can in Strictness require. So *Servants* are bound to submit themselves to their Masters, not only in doing their Work, but doing it in simplicity and singleness of Heart, as to God, considering it as a Duty which they owe to God, as well as to Man, and that they must look for their Recompence from Him; So they must study to please their Masters, not provoking them by rude or cross Answers, not purloyning or wasting unnecessarily their Masters Goods, not taking of their time, which is their Masters, to spend in their own Service, or in Pleasure, or Idleness.

Oh! how happy would Families be, if all therein did observe these Rules? We should have no Complaints of the Churlishness or Carelessness of *Husbands*, of the Prodigality and Disloyalty of *Wives*, of the Harshness or Severity of *Parents* and *Masters*, of the Undutifulness and Unfaithfulness of *Children* and *Servants*.

S E C T. XIII.

How far Religion advances the Happiness of Kingdoms and Commonwealths; not only Naturally, as it prescribes the best Laws and Rules to all sorts of Persons, and keeps Men within the Bounds of their Duty; but Morally, as it brings down Blessings, keeps off Judgments. The false Accusations which Christians have lain under in all Ages, Julian's wicked Policy.

NOW let us proceed to consider Man in a Politick State, as a Part of a Kingdom or Common-wealth: And if we would describe some Utopia, or set down a Model of a happy well-grounded flourishing Common-wealth; we need go no further than the Scriptures for our *Maxims*, and describe the several Members of it according to what the Gospel requires that they should be. I know the great Ones of the World have been jealous of the Kingdom of Christ, as *Herod* was troubled when he first heard of his Birth. I know not what Occasion the Abuses of some Impostors may have

have given to Mens Prejudice and Suspicion; but (as I said before) that the Observation of Christ's Precepts would prevent more Diseases, than his Miracles cured; so I may boldly affirm, that his spiritual Kingdom, were it set up in the World, (that is, did his Laws take Place, and were they duely observed) they would attract more, and be more taking, than his supposed earthly Monarchy, which made Multitudes run after him in the Days of his Flesh, *John vi.* And it is the great Honour of Religion, and an evident Argument of the real Worth and Excellency of it, that not only those whose corrupt Affections have baffled their Judgments to believe that Religion is but a Fancy, a devised Fable, or at least to wish and pretend it to be so; but the wisest of such Men as have followed the Dictates of natural Reason, and Men whom none can imagine to have been forestalled with too favourable an Opinion of Religion, or to have been *diuinaueris*, *superstitiously over-aw'd* by a Deity; that these, I say, such as *Plato*, *Plutarch*, *Tully*, *Seneca*, *Machiavel*, *Campanella*, should look upon it as such a good Engine for moving the huge Bodies of Kingdoms and Common-wealths; yea, a necessary *Basis* to found Government upon, (as *Plutarch* sheweth) without which

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which it can no more subsist, than a Castle or City in the Air; it shews clearly that there is, that proposed in Religion, which if Men (according to their Opinion) can be but flattered into a belief of, it will keep them in their due Place and Order, that every Part of such a vast *Machina* may move regularly. And it is a good Observation of the *Historian*, that *Rome* had the Happiness in the first founding of it, to have such Kings successively, as did by degrees take Care of such Things as did most conduce to to its Flourishing and Establishment; and that when *Romulus* had built the City, and erected a new Kingdom, *Numa Pompilius* did immediately succeed him, and establish Religion and the Worship of God, so far as the Light of Nature would guide him thereto. And the Truth is, the Belief of another Life after this, and of some invisible Power superior to the Power of Man, is absolutely necessary for the swaying and managing those two great Engines of *Hope* and *Fear*, which turn about the whole World: So that (as *Campanella* well observes) *Religione e anima della Repubblica e difesa della legge naturale, &c.* Religion is the Soul of a Commonwealth, and Bulwark of the Law of Nature; because the Love and Fear of God, of eternal Punishments and Rewards, do com-

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compel Men to the Observation of the Law. What will a Man care for his Life, if he apprehend that there is none after this? And there is no means to restrain Men from whatever Insolences or Violences they may think necessary to the Contentment of their present Life, if they do not look for an After-reckoning: But they might well say, *Let us Eat and Drink, for to Morrow we shall Die*; and rather contemn a miserable Life, than omit any means for the bettering of it. *He that sets Light by his own Life is Master of another Man's*, saith Seneca. And we know the Form of Indictments in our own Law for any Crime, is *Such a one not having the fear of God before his Eyes, did wickedly, &c.* commit such an Act. And Abraham thought when he was in Gerar, that they would not stick at any the vilest Action, because, as he supposed, *the Fear of God was not in that Place*, Gen. xv. 10. "So we find the Atheist in Lucretius, Lib. i. complaining of his being over-aw'd by the Suspicion which he had of an eternal Punishment after this Life: If he could have been assured that there should be no Life after this, or that then there should be an end of Mens Sufferings, he could easily laugh at Religion, and despise the threatnings of their Vates.

" But,

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“ But, seeing he knew not the Nature
“ of the Soul, whether it was propagat-
“ ed with the Body, or infused ; whe-
“ ther it did dye with the Body, or
“ were cast into the *Stygian* Lake, he
“ could not free himself from the Fears
“ of an eternal Misery after Death.

But I will come more particularly to shew how Religion doth contribute to the Happiness and Welfare of the Societies of Men, setting the Boundaries of every one's Duty, prescribing to all, from the highest to the lowest ; telling the great Ones of the World, that *they which Rule over Men must be Just, ruling in the fear of God, whose Kingdom is over all, who Rules in the Kingdoms of Men, and gives them to whomsoever he will; and he makes them his Ministers, not to be Terrors to good Works, but to Evil : To be Fathers to the Poor, and to search out the Cause which they know not ; to break the Jaws of the Wicked, and pluck the spoil out of their Teeth.* Inferiors are thereby likewise instructed to submit themselves to their Superiors, to give them due Honour and Tribute, to be subject for Conscience Sake, which is the best Foundation of Loyalty and Fidelity : As *Constantius* would say, those that would not be true to God, would not be true to him.

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If any shall here say, *Quid Verba audiam*? We have found the contrary true, and have oft seen Religion made a Cloak to palliate Sedition and Rebellion: I might answer by an *Antistrophe*, retorting the Objection; It seems, Religion is Good in itself, because it is made use of to palliate that which is Evil: Men do not counterfeit ordinary Stones, or Iron, but *Gold* and *Pearls*, as I have already upon Occasion observed: If Satan be transformed into an Angel of Light, what wonder if his Ministers be sometimes transformed into the Servants of God? I may again say with *Tertullian*, *Si accusasse sat est quis erit innocens*? None can maintain their Innocency, if upon a bare Accusation they shall be condemned, without a fair hearing. Not Christ himself, *John* xix. 12. Nor his Followers, *Acts* xvii. 7. This odious Crimination hath been used in several Ages, as the most effectual Means to subject Christians to the displeasure of Princes, and to popular Hatred; which they had some Pretence for in those Times, when the Emperors enjoined such Things by their Authority as Christians did justly scruple; which occasioned that wicked Policy of *Julian*, (that he might avoid the Imputation of Persecution, which he saw was grown Odious) to set the Heathen Idols

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Idols by the Emperor's Statue, that while they refused to give *religious Honour* to the one, they might be accused of denying *civil Respect* to the other.

Let us now descend to consider the Aspect that Religion hath upon Fellow-Citizens or Subjects, or how it conduceth to the mutual Benefit and Advantage of them. And first, let us consider what an Influence that general Rule of Christ, *Mat. vii. 12.* would have upon all Mankind, to bring back again the *Golden Age*, if when we have to do with others, we would put our selves into their Condition, and consider how we would desire to be dealt with in such a Case. How gently and tenderly would Superiors carry themselves towards their Inferiors, and with how much Respect and Observance would Inferiors carry themselves to their Superiors? The Rich would not withhold from the Poor, when he had wherewith to relieve him, and supply his wants, but would bring upon himself *the Blessing of him who is ready to perish, and make the Heart of the Poor to rejoice and sing.* The Poor would not by his Idleness be unnecessarily burdensome to the Rich, or commit Rapes upon his Charity, but would labour diligently with his Hands, and abate the Allowance which Men ordinarily give to their Lusts, that so he might be
in

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in a Capacity rather to give than to receive. The Lender would not take Advantage of the Necessity of the Borrower, nor the Borrower ungratefully defraud the Lender; the Seller would not deceive or over-reach the Buyer, nor the Buyer undervalue the Goods of the Seller.

Consider further, how Christ more particularly requires that we should be like God in Goodness, doing good to all, forgiving Injuries, and making their Condition our own, ready to be *ἀντιποιῶμεν*, for each other, (as Ignatius oft speaks) *laying down our Lives for our Brethren, dwelling in Love, which works no ill to her Neighbour, envies not, vaunts not it self, is not puffed up, behaves not it self unseemingly, seeks not her own, is not easily provoked, thinks no Evil, rejoyceth not in Iniquity, but in the Truth; bears all Things, believes all Things, hopes all Things, suffers all Things.* If such Commands of Christ were observed, Men might beat their Swords into Plow-shears, their Spears into pruning Hooks; there would be no leading into Captivity, no complaining in our Streets, no vexatious Suits, no groaning of the Oppressed, no Extremity of Poverty or Want, to put Men upon Violence, private Injuries, publick Sedition. If Men would, according to the Command of Christ, obey their Teachers,

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Teachers, prove all Things, hold fast that which is good, prefer others in Honour before themselves, not thinking of themselves above what is meet, not being wise in their own Eyes, but humbly enquire after Truth, suspecting their own Judgment, following after those Things which make for Peace and Edification, studying to be quiet, letting their Moderation be made known to all Men : And if those that are Teachers and Rulers in the Church would not lord it over the Heritage of God, but be gentle towards them, as a Nurse to her Children, not seeking theirs, but them, doing all Things for their edifying, we should soon see an end of Divisions and Schisms, and Separations in the Church.

If any here object, that I fancy a Church of *Catharists*, and such Purity and Holiness in Men, as is not to be expected in this World ; I answer, I speak of what is rather to be *desired* than *hoped for*, and what Religion would do towards the Happiness of Mankind, were the Rules of it duly observed, and would Men be faithful to the Principles of it ; which is sufficient to this *Apology*, which I here make against such as would reproach it, and bring it into disgrace in the World ; and to prove, that the more Religion flourisheth in any Nation, the hap-

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happier it is, and the better ordered :
And that we may conclude with the
Tragedian ; Where *Modesty, Righteousness,*
Holiness, Piety and Faithfulness are neglected,
that Kingdom-cannot long stand.

And if any think this would do well
indeed, if all would agree to do thus : I
answer, the Neglect of others doth not
discharge us from our Duty ; we owe it
to God, though Men should not deserve
it, or requite it with a reciprocal Care
of Justice and Equity. And farther, it
is a great Advantage for raising our Ho-
nour, when others neglect their Duty.
Noah and *Lot* living amongst ungodly
Men in a wicked Age, shining as Stars in
a dark Night, had a singular Testimony
of God's special Favour, in his deliver-
ing them from the common Calamity
wherein others were involved, and lea-
ving an honourable mention of them up-
on Record to all Generations.

There is yet another Way, whereby
good Men do promote the *Weal-Publick*,
and that is by the Education of Chil-
dren, which in well governed Common-
wealths there hath always been a special
Care taken for. Those are counted good
Common wealths Men, that Build and
Plant such Things as the Common-wealth
may be the better for, and enjoy the
Fruit of when they are dead and gone:
But

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But those that stock the Common-wealth with Plants of Righteousness, which may in future Times bring forth the Fruits of Justice and Equity, do more promote the publick Good : And those who let go Foxes and Wolves, are not more worthy of Punishment, than such as bring up Children in a Common-wealth, which through their Fault, and neglect of good Education, are addicted to nothing but Idleness and Luxury. And as Midwives form and fashion the Head while the Bones are tender, so Parents should fashion their Childrens Minds, and form their Manners, while they are Tender and Plyant; which if then neglected, do very hardly afterwards yield to Discipline Ecclesiastical or Civil.

Thus far I have shewn how Godliness doth promote the Good of a Nation in a way of *natural Causality*. There is yet another way whereby it doth conduce thereto; and that is by a *moral Causality* : God delivering often the *Island of the Innocent*, which is delivered by the pureness of his Hands, *Job xxii. 30.* These are as the Trees in a Causey, which having Life and Substance in them, though sometimes they cast their Leaves, do keep it from going to ruin and mouldering away; to which the Prophet is supposed to allude, *Isa. vi. 13.* I know
Ahab

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Ahab himself looked upon the good *Prophet* as the *Troubler of Israel*, who indeed was as the *Chariot and Horsemen thereof* for its *Security and Defence*. And he justly retorted that *Crimination* upon *Ahab* himself. So in the primitive Times, if there were War, Earthquakes, Plague, Inundations, the poor Christians must to the Lions, as if they were the Cause of it. When *Aurelius* upon Experience found that they prevailed more by their Prayers for the Good of the Empire, than others could by Prayers and Arms; so that he desired the Senate to cease their Persecution against them, lest they should turn those spiritual Weapons against the Empire, the effect of which he had found in such an eminent Instance, and that they might pray for the Good of the Empire. As *Darius* desired that the *Jews* might offer *Sacrifice of sweet Savours unto the God of Heaven*, and pray for the *Life of the King, and of his Sons*, *Ezra* vi. 10. Upon the same Ground *Justinian* (as we may see, *Constit. vi. ad Epiphanium*) took such Care for the establishing of the true Religion, and for the Observation of those sacred Rules which were given by the Apostles, as that which would conduce much to the Happiness of the Empire, and especially for the settling of a pious Ministry, by whose
Prayers

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Prayers he hoped for so great Blessings upon himself and his Government. And a wise and great Prince in our own Memory, doth not only acknowledge that natural Influence which Religion hath upon the Obedience of Subjects, (whereof I have a little before spoken) who himself doth best express his own Sense of it. *It is no wonder (saith he) if Men not fearing God, should not honour their King. They will easily contemn such Shadows of God, who reverence not that supreme and adorable Majesty, in Comparison of whom all the Glory of Men and Angels is but Obscurity.* But as knowing also how far it doth conduce morally to the Happiness of a Nation, gives it in Charge to his Son (his Majesty now reigning in England) *to begin and end with God, and always to keep up solid Piety, and those fundamental Truths, which mend both the Hearts and Lives of Men; it being not only the Glory of Princes to advance God's Glory, but the means to make them prosperous, and keep them from being miserable.* Whereupon his Majesty, as remembering such pious Words and Counsels of his Royal Father, did at his first Restoration express his just displeasure against such, as pretending a great Zeal to his Cause and Service, did not only discredit it by the License of their Lives and Manners, but hazard the driving a-way

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way those approaching Mercies, which they should rather have acknowledged in their several Stations, with Circumspection, Integrity, and Reformation in their Lives. It is ordinarily said,

---Delirant Reges plectuntur Achivi.

But it is true on the other Hand also, that Rulers are punished for the Sins of the People, 1 Sam. xii. 25. God ordering it so in his wise and righteous Providence; not only as they partake many times in each others Sins, but as they have a joint Interest, so as one suffers in the Sufferings of another. I remember *Machiavel* (who was never thought to be over-precise, or to be troubled with a bogling Conscience) complains of it in his *Common-wealth*, Cap. 12. *de Republica*, as that which he feared would be the Ruin of *Italy*, "that Wickedness
" did so much abound, and that there was
" such a decay of Religion amongst them;
" and they were so far degenerated from
" the Purity of the primitive Times,
" that they had Reason to expect the Ven-
" geance of God upon them. Where-
" upon he shews how necessary it is for
" Princes to have a special Care for the
" Preservation of the Purity of Religion;" which I am sure is an innocent Policy,
F and

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and the wise Observation or Assertion
which he lays down : For, besides that
the Church hath always been a *burden-*
some Stone, which hath broken in Pieces
all that have burdened themselves with it,
Zach. xii. 3. Whilst *Righteousness* doth
exalt a Nation, Prov. xiv. 34. *Wickedness*
(like the Talent of Lead in the Ephah,
Zach. v. 8.) *sinks it down.* We know
ten righteous Persons would have saved
a *Sodom* ; and God would do nothing a-
gainst it, whilst there was one in it. And
if God did not, for the Sake of such,
many times spare Nations, and shew
them some peculiar Favour, there had
been no ground for that which he himself
hath pronounced of them, that they are
such, of whom the World is not worthy.



SECT.

S E C T. XIV.

An Enquiry into the Causes why Religion is so much neglected. The remoter Causes, the Corruption of Man's Nature, the Malice and Power of the Devil; the nearer Cause, the prevalency of Sense against Faith and Reason; which is removed, by shewing in how many Instances of our Lives we do by Reason correct the Errors of Sense.

HE that shall read what I have hitherto written, and observe the general Practice of the World, will perhaps wonder, that if these Things be so, Men should no better understand their own Interest, but generally neglect this, which is pretended to conduce so much to the making of the World happy: And what I have said, though it may seem to some to have some shew of Probability, will hardly obtain Belief, but lie under some Suspicion, like the honest Projects of some Well-wisher to the publick Good, which never obtained so much Credit as to be reduced to

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Tryal. Wherefore I shall a little enquire after the Causes of that Ungodliness and Prophaneness, that so generally reigns in the World. And first, we know the Scripture hath oft taught us, that the Nature of Man is so corrupted by that which is called *Original Sin*, that the Imaginations of the Thoughts of his Heart are only evil, and that continually; his Heart desperately wicked, and deceitful above all Things; his Understanding so darkned, that he is alienated from the Life of God, through the Ignorance that is in him: Filled with all Unrighteousness: Fleebly Lusts, warring against the Soul, and prevailing in our Members to bring forth Fruit unto Death. The Wisdom of the Flesh is Enmity against God; so that Man is Wise to do Evil, but he hath no Knowledge to do Good. Now Experience doth more confirm us in the Belief of this, than a Thousand Arguments. Again, we oft read of the Enmity of the Devil against Mankind; and though his Power be not much discerned by many, yet it is like the Influence of Cœlestial Bodies, (Sun, Moon and Stars) upon these sublunary Things, Powerful and Effectual, though not discerned but in the Effects: Hence we read of his working effectually in the Hearts of the Children of Disobedience, of Men being taken Captive of him at his Pleasure;
of

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of the *Strength of Delusion*, of his going about like a roaring Lion; of wrestling with *Principalities and Powers*; and resisting the Devil *steadfast in the Faith*. He that should have seen the poor Man cured by Christ, offering violence to himself, and casting himself sometimes into the Fire, sometimes into the Water, would have easily concluded that he was acted by some evil Spirit to such Things as were destructive to his own Nature: So to see Men sin against their own Souls, and run such desperate Hazards against their own Interest, is a clear Argument that they are acted by some other Nature, which seeks their Ruin and Destruction.

Now these may be remote Causes of the prevalency of that *Atheism*, which we see and lament in the World; but yet there must be some nearer Causes searched out: For (unless it be in some secret *Sympathies and Antipathies*) Man doth ordinarily act according to Reason, that is, what is either really so, or seems so to him; and there must be some *ratio motiva* to elicit or draw forth the Acts of his Will. The Grace of God is Powerful in good Actions, yet it works congruously to our Natures, moving by the Means of some rational Arguments and Principles: So the Efficacy

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cacy of the Devil is very great in evil Actions; yet he makes use for the most Part of *moral Arguments*: Tho' he had such a Hand in Judas his Treason, and Ananias his Lying, as that he is said to put these Things into their Hearts; yet, by the whole Tenor of their Story, we find that there were some moral Motives he made use of, and that it was Covetousness that did more immediately sway in these Sins.

Now (it seems) one main Reason of Mens *Atheism*, which is more near and immediate, is the *Prevalency of Sense*; as there are some Actions which do prevent the Reasonings of the Mind, which we call *Actiones Hominis*, but not *Humanae*; which indeed are *Actions of Men*, but not *humane Actions*, proceeding from the essential Principle of Man. Objects coming to the Sense, before they can have Access to the Understanding, the Spirits move disorderly, till the Understanding taking Cognizance of the Matter, do rectify such Motions of the Spirits. As in a sudden Noise, or unexpected Sight, the Senses as the *Centinels* take the first Alarm; but as soon as the News is carried to the Understanding, as the main Guard or principal Officer, and found to be of no dangerous Consequence, this sudden Commotion is allayed: So in
more

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more important Passages of our Lives, Sense makes many disorderly Sallies and Motions, without taking Counsel of the Understanding; and Objects do make very deep Impressions upon them: And the Scripture doth take Notice how much we are led by Sense in this frail State, wherein we are so, as we may all say with the Prophet, *Lam. iii. 51. Our Eye affects our Heart.* This is the Foundation of the Apostle's Argument, *1 John iv. 20. He that loveth not his Brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* We have a Thousand Times more Reason to love God, than to love our Brother, considering the Perfections and Excellencies that are in God to render him amiable, and the Obligations which we are under to him, who hath done more Ten Thousand Times for us, than all the Friends which we have in the World. But whatever Reason there may be in the Thing it self, the Apostle argues according to our poor Capacity, and the Access that Things have to us; and doth clearly suppose, that Things which have Access to our Senses, are more effectual for moving our Affections, than such Things as are only the Object of Faith. So though we hear of an Infinite Majesty that created and sustains our selves, and all other finite Beings;

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who seeth all our Actions, and will one Day call us to an Account for them; and likewise of an eternal Weight of Glory, made up of Things, which *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, nor ever entered in: to the Heart of Man to conceive:* These Things do not move us, because they are far out of our Sight, and the Things of the World which are nearer to our Senses, and are the immediate Objects of them, pleasing the *Taste*, delighting the *Smell*, tickling and flattering the *Ear*, dazzling the *Eyes*, have more Prevalency upon us.

But yet, upon Examination, we shall find this is not sufficient to prevail against those important Considerations, which I have already proposed, nor to leave Mankind excusable for abandoning himself to the Pleasures of this Life, so as to neglect those better Things which are propounded as the Reward of Holiness. Let us but quit our selves like Men, and exercise those common Principles of Reason which we exercise in other Affairs of our Lives, and though we cannot perhaps thereby silence the Glamours of Sense, yet we may confute them, and reject them. Do we not ordinarily see Men correct the Errors of Sense by Reason? Do we not see them part with their Blood, to prevent the Inconveniency of

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a Disease, which for the most Part they do believe or suspect, not upon the evident Demonstrations (but probable Conjectures) of a Physician, or at best by their own Reason. Do not Men endure the cutting off of a Member to save the Body, and lengthen out a miserable Life for some Days or Years? Do not Men drink the most unpleasing Potions, for the recovery of their Health, or repairing their decayed Strength? Do not Men cast their Seed into the Earth, in hopes of receiving the Increase of it? Doth not the Merchant send away his Goods, in hope to receive others for them, which may bring him some Gain and Advantage? And what is all this, to denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts; denying our selves the Pleasure of Sin, for the Pleasure of Heaven? Yea, do we not see Men ordinarily binding their Sons to some Apprenticeship for many Years, that so they may learn a Trade to maintain themselves in some Repute in the World, when they shall come to Years? Rather than let them live in Idleness and Pleasure, giving up themselves to childish Sports and Vanities when they are Young, which would afterwards expose them to Poverty and Contempt. And he is accounted a cruel and unjust Father, that will not thus

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love his Child with such a prudent Severity, rather than undo him by a foolish Indulgence. Yet, how wide a difference is there in these Cases? And how far doth this fall short of expressing the Unreasonableness of such, as will rather enjoy present Pleasures, than prepare for future Happiness? A Child is bound to an Apprenticeship, and he perhaps dies before his Time be out, and so all his Labour and Charge is lost; or he doth not live Seven Years a Free Man, after he hath lived Seven Years in a hard Service. But he that gives up himself to the Service of Christ, let it be imagined to be as hard as some Mens Prejudice perswades them; the sooner he dies, the sooner his Service is ended; and though he die never so soon, he loseth not his Freedom, but is made a Citizen of Heaven; and once entered there, he never dies, but doth for ever reap the Fruit of his Labours. Do we not give Twenty Times as much for the *Fee-simple* (as they speak) of an Estate, as it will bring us in one Year? And according to the same Rule, were we sure to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin Twenty Years, and could imagine them to be equal to the Joys of Heaven, yet we should quit them for those everlasting Pleasures which we should enjoy for ever *our selves*; and not only

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only for some Ages, as we hope to do Estates on Earth, not in our *selves*, but only in our *Posterity*. Further yet, we see it is in *vain to lay a Snare in the Sight of any Bird*, *Prov. 1. 17.* they will not come into the Net to feed, if they perceive it; or swallow the Bait, when they see the Hook: Yet foolish Men do venture on Hell, which they are told will certainly be the Wages of Sin; and will enjoy the present Pleasures of it, though they have all the Assurance that a Man can have of any Thing which he sees not with his Eyes, that it will cost him his Life, and that his Soul must rue for ever in Hell. God indeed doth not manifest himself to us ordinarily here, nor take us up as he did *Paul* into the third Heavens, to shew us the Glory thereof; but he will have us to exercise Faith here, and to take his Word, which he hath so fully confirmed to us, that we may as certainly trust to it, as if we had the clearest Evidence in the World. The Husbandman casts his Seed into the Ground without any fear or suspicion of losing, having been confirmed by many Experiments in the Hope of receiving it again with Increase; but a Thousand Experiments will not so fully perswade, as a divine Testimony confirmed by Covenants, Oaths and Seals, (the ordinary

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ordinary Ways of Confirmation amongst Men :) So that a Divine Faith, founded upon the Word of God, is as *the Substance of Things hoped for*, which are but future, and makes them as it were really subsist; and is *the Evidence of Things not seen*: confirming them to us, and as fully perswading us of them, tho' they are not obvious to the Sense, as any Philosophical Demonstration can confirm any Truth. So that notwithstanding the Apostle owns Sense to be a great means to move Affections in this frail State wherein we are, yet Faith serves Believers for a sufficient Foundation of Love and Delight: *Though they see not Jesus Christ, they love him, and rejoice in him with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory*, 1. Pet. i. 7. We are short sighted, and cannot see a far off, 2 Pet. i. 9. but Faith as a *Perspective* brings Things nearer to us, that we may judge of them as really present. Let not our Senses therefore usurp Authority over Faith and Reason, but let Faith and Reason have their perfect Work; let not the Men of the World be wiser in their Generation than Children of Light; let us not be wiser in the Things of the World, than in the Things of Heaven. We chuse not the fairest of Things, (for the most Part) but such as are more serviceable and durable; nor the sweetest, but
that

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that which is wholesome and nourishing; We chuse not the cleanest or pleasantest Way, but that which leads to the Place which we are going to. So let us judge of Things, not according as they present themselves to our Senses, but as they have a real intrinsic Worth to commend themselves to our Judgments; and let us not judge of Things according to their suitableness to our present Fancies, but as they conduce to our abiding Good; measuring every Thing not by *Time*, but by *Eternity*.



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S E C T. XV.

Inconsiderateness, another great Cause of Atheism; against which, the best Remedies are a serious Apprehension of the great Moment and Importance of Spiritual Things, frequent Reading and Hearing the Word of God, Christian Communion and Conference about Matters of Religion, mutual Admonition. The Prevalency of evil Customs and Habits, the Folly of deferring Repentance.

ANother chief Reason of that Atheism which abounds so much in the World, is, *Inconsiderateness*: the most important Truths do not affect us, any longer than we consider them. The *Platonists* observed this, who made *Knowledge* nothing but *Remembrance*, or an actual Consideration of that which Man knows; not reckoning that to be *Knowledge*, which lies dead in the *Habit*, and doth not at all affect the Soul. And we find that the *Scripture* lays much weight upon this *Consideration* or *Remembrance*; yea, as much as Man's Salvation comes to. We may observe, *Isa.* 1. 3. there is an *Epimone*, where-

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wherein the Prophet lays the Sin of *Israel* upon this, that they did not *consider*. So *1 Kings* viii. 47. We may observe Affliction brings Men to bethink themselves, that brings them to Repentance, and Repentance is a means to obtain Pardon: And we find by Experience, that when Men are by Sickneſs brought to a ſerious weighing of Matters, they are eaſily perſwaded to make good Promiſes and Reſolutions; which when their Minds are afterwards (by the Pleaſures of the World) diverted from the Thoughts of, they turn to their former Courſe: Yea, we ſee many times that Men are ſo ingenuous as to yield to Reproofs, and to condemn themſelves and their own Ways, when they are admoniſh'd of them; as if they ſtood in need of no more, but to be put in Mind of ſuch Things as they have in their own Hearts, and only to have Conſcience awakened. And we find *Ezek.* xviii. 14, 28. that the turning away of a wicked Man from the Evil of his Ways, depends chiefly upon *Conſideration*.

I have already ſhewed that the Devil is the remote Cauſe of that Wickedneſs and Prophaneneſs which abounds in the World; yet, he uſeth this as the great Means to draw Men from God, to divert their Minds from the Thoughts of ſuch Things as may have an Influence upon

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on *their Affections and Actions* to make a change in them, as we see plainly in the *Parable of the Sower*, Luk. viii. 12. *Men bear the Word, then comes the Devil and takes it away out of their Hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.* First, we find by Experience that Men are oft seriously affected with those things that they hear, while they are lively represented to their Minds, and pressed seriously upon their Consciences: Presently we observe that their Thoughts are quite taken off from those Things, and (like Water which hath been warmed) they return to their old Temper again. We see here Christ himself assigns the Cause of it; it is the Devil that doth this: Where it is supposed that he hath Power to do it, tho' we are not so easily able to understand how he doth it, unless it be by propounding other Objects to us. We see here his Design in it discovered, which is to hinder their *believing*, and consequently their *Salvation*; which we find by sad Experience to be the woful Consequent of this his Malice. Now the most effectual Remedy against this *Inconsiderateness*, would be a serious Apprehension of the great Moment and Concernment of these Things. It is the means which *Moses* prescribes to the *Israelites*, Deut. xxxii. 47. for setting their Hearts to those Things, which

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which he testified to them: *It is not a vain Thing for you, (saith he) it is your Life; and by those Things you shall prolong your Days.* It is a Rule of Prudence which prevails throughout, that *we should look to the main Chance, and not neglect the important Affairs of our Life.* The Husbandman forgets many petty Businesses, but he never forgets to Plow and sow. He would be accounted a mad Man, that should go to Market and buy Trifles and Toys for his Children, and forget to buy them Bread; a Traitor will not forget to sue out his Pardon, or a Man that hath a Suit for his whole Estate, forget to produce his Evidences, and prepare his Answer against the Term. This is our Case; we are condemned already in Law, *John iii. 18.* that is in force against us; we know not how soon we shall be fetched to Execution. If a Man did but apprehend the danger he is in continually, while he is a wicked Man, and in an unregenerate Condition, standing continually upon the Pits Brink, and ready to fall in, it would surely awake him out of his security, and prevent his Sleep, till he should have some hope of his Pardon; or the Thoughts of the infinite Advantage that true *Godliness* brings with it, would make him continually apply his Heart to it. *The abundance*

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ance of the Rich, suffers him not to sleep; by Reason of his Care and Solitude for the keeping of it: And we have more Cause a Thousand times to be solicitous in this Case, lest a Promise and possibility being left us of entering into such a Rest, we should by any Means fall short of it.

The Ordinances of the Gospel, the Reading of the Word, the Communion of the Saints, are prescribed by God as a further Remedy of this Evil. *Heb. iii. 13.* Daily mutual Exhortation is commended as a means to prevent the hardening of our Hearts through the deceitfulness of Sin, which the more it is indulged, the more it insinuates and prevails upon us. Mens Knowledge makes not the Word of God less useful to them; therefore it is a vain ignorant Thing for Men to neglect it, upon pretence of knowing as much as their Teachers: Tho' the Saints to whom *Peter* writes, were instructed and established in the Truth, yet he thinks it necessary to write those Things to them, *2 Pet. i. 12.* to put them in Remembrance, and thereby to stir up their pure Minds, *Cap. iii. 1.* The Words of the Wise being not only as Nails to fasten, that Christians may be established, but as Goads to excite, that so they may not grow negligent, *Eccl. xii. 11.* and the Word of Ministers lies more in awakening the Conscience,

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ence, and quickening the Affections, than informing the Judgment: and there are few Men that live where the Sound of the Gospel comes, but know that, which duly improved, would make a considerable Change in their Lives: And I think it might be of singular use in a Christian Life, for those that have near Relations, (if such as are prudent and faithful) or those that have Friends which are to them as their own Souls, if they live together, and have opportunity to know well each others Conversation, seriously to oblige themselves to each other, if they observe any thing in each others Lives or Carriages which is unbecoming their Profession, to take the first Opportunity (with all Christian Meekness and Privacy) to tell them of it; how they spake such a thing unadvisedly, did this thing unseemly, exceeded in the other thing. I know it is a Duty of Zeal and Charity, which all Christians owe to each other; but those have the best Opportunity for it, who have daily intimate Conversation with others, and Advantage for observing the whole Procedure of their Lives. And this which I have now been speaking of, doth likewise make that gracious Christian Communication which the Gospel requires, more necessary. And for this Cause, God did
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not only require it of the *Jews*, but farther enjoins them the use of their *Phylacteries*, and the Writing the most important Periods of the Law upon their Gates and Posts, that so the things which did so nearly concern them, might be continually sounding in their Ears, and represented before their Eyes.

I might assign further, some other Causes and Cures of Mens Atheism and Wickedness: as the Corruption of Man's Nature doth strongly incline a Man to Evil, so Regeneration is that which doth change their Natures, and dispose them to Holiness. But there are many A&ts of Morality, which conduce to Mens present Advantage, (both in a personal and a relative Capacity) to which Regeneration is not absolutely necessary; and I have already spoken something of it, *Se&t.* 7. therefore I shall say no more of it in this place.

Concerning the Prevalency of evil Habits and Customs, and the Prejudice that doth thereby arise against Holiness, as also concerning the Advantage that one who is a Christian indeed, (and hath Experience of spiritual Comforts, and the Sweetness of the Duties of Religion) hath above one that is only outwardly a Christian, and doth Duties only as a Task, I have elsewhere spoken some-

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somewhat also, and so supersede from any farther Consideration of them. I confess, I think the putting off and procrastinating of Repentance, detains many in the Snares of Satan: but the former Part of my Discourse doth wholly militate against this Folly of Men, and deprive them of all such Pretence, in that (besides the Imprudence and extream Madnes of putting off that which we know not whether we shall ever have Opportunity for, and leaving a Matter of such Importance, as our eternal Salvation, at uncertainties) the Advantages which Men have by observing the Precepts of the Gospel, even in this Life, do require our most speedy applying our selves to the observance of them, and argue the deferring of our Repentance the greatest Folly; and all that have been brought thereto, (especially in their old Age) have been ready with *Austin* to complain, that *they have known God too late*, and repented that they did no sooner exchange the Pleasures of Sin, for the Joy and Peace which is in believing.

S E C T. XVI.

Objections from Differences in Religion answered: Tho' we could not be fully assured that the Christian Religion is true, yet it would be our Wisdom to observe the Rules and Precepts of it. The Proofs which we have of the Truth of Christian Religion, clearer than those which some desire to have, and clearer than any produced for the Truth of any other Religion. Objections from the Improbability and seeming Contradiction of many things in Scripture, answered. Notwithstanding the Difference amongst Christians, all of them are agreed in so much as may serve for the well-ordering of our Conversations.

THERE are some yet that (being willing to find any Pretence for palliating their Sin) will ask how we shall find out the *true Religion*, amidst so many Differences as there are amongst Men about it. When we see Men agreed, and come to some Accord about Matters of Religion, we will consider of

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of the whole Business. Now to such I answer, that if their Doubt be concerning the *Christian Religion*, whether that be the only true amongst those which are professed in the *World*: First, The Esteem which it hath obtained in the World, and the Reverence wherewith it hath been received in all Places to which the Knowledge of it hath come, may challenge from any wise Man the most serious weighing of what is offered for the Proof of it; which I will not here stand to sum up, but will only say, (and that with much Confidence) that whosoever shall but seriously peruse what hath been written in several Ages, for evincing the Truth of it, will see (at least) so much Probability for the Truth of it, and so much Reasonableness and Equity in the Precepts of it, that they will account it Madness in any to run the Hazard of losing that Reward which it propounds, or suffering the Punishment which it threatens to the Despisers of it, rather than submit to a *Law* so *holy*, so *just*, so *good*. Let us suppose it may prove false; yet, what would Men lose thereby? Indeed they would lose their future Reward, but they would have the present Advantage of it; for (as *Chrysostom* truly says, δυσκολώτερον ἡ κακία, scil. ἡ ἀρετή. The way of Sin is more difficult than the way of

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of Holiness. And I cannot but here sub-
joyn the Saying of a Learned Man, on
Matth. xi. 29. Precepta Christi talia sunt,
ut si par ponatur consuetudo unius hominis
ad rectè vivendum, alterius ad flagitia, non
dubie multo dulcior sit futura vita qua se-
cundum virtutem est; gravissima enim tri-
buta pendunt qui ambitioni, qui avaritia,
qui libidini serviunt: that is, "Suppose
" several Men equally accustomed to a
" sinful and a holy Life, the Way
" of Vertue and Piety shall be found to
" be much more pleasant; and those
" that are Vassals to Ambition, Cove-
" rousness, Sensuality, will find the Tri-
" bute heavy which they pay to such
" Tyrants." So that as those who search
into the Secrets of Nature to find out
the *Philosophers Stone*, though they attain
not their End, yet find out many Se-
crets and Experiments, which may be
pleasing and useful: in like manner,
those who seek eternal Happiness in the
Gospel, though it should be supposed
that they may miss of it, yet they shall
find such real Advantage by the Obser-
vation of those Precepts that are there
given, that their Labour would not be
in vain, but they would be sufficiently
recompenced for it. But now suppose
the things therein delivered should prove
true, what a woful Case would those be
in,

in, which should be found to be Neglecters of it? what a dreadful thing would it be for them to *fall into the Hands of the living God*? And you that think good to suspend your Belief of the Truth of the Gospel, that so you may without disturbance enjoy the Pleasures of Sin, and prevent the Clamours of an unquiet accusing Conscience; gird up your Loyns like Men, and tell me, (I beseech you) do the Arguments which you have against the Truth of *Christian Religion*, as far exceed in probability those which are alledg'd for the Proof of it, as the Glory which it propounds (as the Reward of Holiness) exceeds the Pleasures of Sin, (supposing that Pleasure in it which you imagine) or as far as the Torments threatned as the Wages of Sin exceed the utmost Severity that Men can be imagined to submit themselves to in Obedience to the Gospel? Yea, let Men but act congruously, and allow as much in Matters of Religion, as in other Instances of their Lives, and we shall find that as the Christians of old argued against the Heathens, that they believed many things in Philosophy, and human Learning, upon less evidence than what was offered for the Proof of Christianity; so Men do make much greater Adventures upon more improbable Grounds, than any they can be imagined to make by conforming themselves to the

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Rules

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Rules of the Gospel upon the Grounds laid down for Confirmation of it. And if Men were as suspicious and wary in other Things, as these *Scepticks* in Matters of Religion, they must not eat, lest thro' the Malice or Negligence of some, there should be Poison mingled with their Meat; they must not go into an House, lest it should fall upon their Heads; they must not obey any Commands of their Princes, unless they should come and deliver them in express Words to themselves, because some might possibly counterfeit their Hands and Seals; yea it is most evident, that they must forbear so many things, that they would not be fit for Converse with Men, but would quite overthrow human Society.

Let me go a little further: I desire (in good earnest) to know of Men, what Evidence they require to persuade them of the Truth of Christian Religion, and it may be what they have already will be found more convincing. Some may fancy a Voice from Heaven would satisfy them. I answer, they have already a *more sure Word of Prophecy*, 2 Pet. i. 19. They think perhaps if one should come from the other World, of their former Acquaintance, and tell them what is done there, they should believe: but he that doth not believe the Scriptures, *will not believe tho' one should arise from the Dead*, Luke xvi. 31.

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Neither do I beg the Question, in alledging these Things from Scripture, grounding them wholly on its Authority; but assert them boldly as *Theorems*, which are demonstrable by Reason; being assured, that there might be more objected against such kind of Evidence, than is to be objected against that which is brought in the Scriptures. For tell me, I beseech you, in Case there should be such a Voice from Heaven, might we not as easily suspect that our Senses might be deceived, or that it might be formed in the Air by some Spirit, as suspect that we should be imposed upon by the Prophets, who wrought so many Miracles for the Confirmation of their Mission from God; who so plainly foretold many Things to be accomplished after many Ages, which could not be fore-seen in their Causes; that were holy Men, and such as could not be imagined to have a Design to-deceive, especially the *Things* which they delivered being such as exposed them to Danger and Trouble, and were not likely to bring them any Advantage in the World? Or should *Moses*, or one of the Prophets or Apostles arise from the Dead, and tell us they did indeed live here upon the Earth in such Times, and preach such Doctrine, and work such Miracles; yea, and they have found since their Death, that those Things which they Pro-

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phesied, or Preached, are true ; they see those who obeyed their Word triumphing in Heaven, and those who contemned it tormented in Hell ; might we not as easily suspect that this might be some Spirit which appeared in their Shape to delude us, as that the *Jews* who are Enemies to the *Christian Religion*, should devise a Writing and disperse it abroad in the World, which would so plainly confirm the *Christian Religion* as the *Old Testament* doth, which is at this Day owned among the *Jews* ; or that those ancient Writers should conspire together to deceive the World, in recording the same Things which we find in Scripture ; or that the Scriptures should be translated into so many Languages, and dispersed all the World over, so soon after the Apostles times, and none be so false to the Divulgers of it, or so true to the World, as to give Notice of it, if it were a Forgery ; or that these Things should be recorded in the *Roman Registers*, and the Acts of their Senate, to which *Tertullian* durst appeal, if there had been no such Thing ? This one Thing would I learn ; should one come to us, as from the Dead, in the Likeness of *Alexander, Caesar, William the Conqueror, Wickliff, Lusher, Calvin*, and tell us in sober sadness that they were such Persons that lived in such a time, did such Things, preached such Doctrine ; whether

ether should we believe such a Testimony sooner than the unanimous Consent of *History* concerning them, and those Books and Writings which are generally received as the Works of such Men?

If any shall say, that *Turks* and *Heathens* are as confident of the Truth of that Religion which they were brought up in, as we are of the Truth of ours: I answer, they have not like Ground for their Confidence. As for the *Heathens*, what became of their *Gods*, their *Oracles*, when the *Hebrew Child* was born, and when the Gospel began to spread in the World? Compare the Miracles wherewith other Religions have been confirmed, with those wherewith the Gospel hath been confirmed, and see whether they be so many, so confessedly above the Power of Nature or Art, so evidently wrought in the sight of all, as those whereby the *Christian Religion* hath been confirmed. What is the Reason that the *Turks* admit no enquiry or dispute about Matters of Religion, but require an implicate Faith? *Truth seeks no Corners, Error shuns the Light.* Examine the Laws of the *Turks* and *Pagans*, whether there be that Purity, Equity, Wisdom, consonancy to right Reason, and the *Light of Nature*, in them, which is to be found in the Scriptures. Examine the Ways and Means by which they they have been propagated, whether they have

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reached any further than their Swords have made way for them; whether the *Weapons of their Warfare were Spiritual or Carnal*: Whereas the Gospel prevailed through the Evidence and Power of the Spirit, against the pretended Authority of the *Jews*, the Wisdom and Learning of the *Grecians*, the Power and Force of the *Romans*; and Fishermen were too hard for *Rabbins, Philosophers, Judges, Generals, Armies.*

If any object the improbability of some Things delivered in Scripture; I shall only propound whether there be not some Things which we are fully assured of, either by *Experiments, or Mathematical Demonstration*, which to others seem as improbable, as any thing in the Scriptures seems to us; and shall we not grant God to be as much wiser than our selves, as we are wiser than other Men; and suppose, he could as easily convince us of those Things which now seem impossible to us, as we can convince others of those Things which they cannot at present believe? And if the seeming Contradictions that are in Scriptures be urged to weaken the Authority of them, they are rather an Argument of the Integrity and Sincerity of the Pen-men; and their leaving things so securely, which do not at first sight seem to accord with other Scriptures, shews clearly they had no Plot to deceive the World, otherwise they

they would have conspired to make their Testimonies agree in Words more exactly. Yet upon Examination of the Matter, and considering the several Circumstances of Time, Place, Persons, Scope, Occasion, the several uses of the same Word and Phrase, the Latitude which all Authors use in their Writings, the several Places and Persons of the same Name, the several Names given to the same Place or Person, the shortness of Scripture History, and supplying in one Place what is wanting in another, the attending rather to Sense and Substance, than to Words and Phrases in citing Scripture; we shall find that there is a very fair accord between those Places which seem to be at the greatest variance: And if we cannot reconcile all Places, yet if we consider that we have, by attending to such Things as I have mentioned already, composed so many seeming differences, we may conclude it is from our own Ignorance, that we cannot compose the rest, and that there is yet somewhat else that we are ignorant of, which if we could find out, we might as easily reconcile the rest, which at present seem most irreconcilable. And it is obvious to every one, how many Difficulties and Contradictions seem to be in every Science, while Men are but Smatterers in it, which presently vanish, as soon as they come more perfectly to understand it. But now if this

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Objection be framed against the Differences which are among Christians which profess the Gospel, I will by the way observe this, that Differences do most abound, where Men (upon serious Apprehensions of the Weight and Importance of the Matters of Faith) do diligently apply themselves to understand themselves the Mysteries of the Gospel, and to see with their own Eyes, being afraid to be deceived in Matters of such Moment, by depending upon the Testimony of others, and unwilling to lose their Souls and Heaven, and God, to save the Labour of seaching after Truth: and in those Nations where I have had opportunity to be conversant, I have found most Differences amongst them, which have been most addicted to Religion, and most solicitous about the Condition of their Souls; and most Agreement amongst them, which have contented themselves to follow others by an implicate Faith, without troubling themselves much to search after Truth; and where there hath been such a coldness and indifferency in Matters of Religion, that all have quietly accorded together; as the *Philosophers* observe, that Cold doth congregate *Heterogeneous* Things, or such Things as are of different kinds, making them all to consist quietly together, which Heat doth sever and separate.

So

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So that I am almost ready to say with *Luther*, that *I know not how to believe, that the Gospel hath been preach'd in a Place where I do not see Errors and Divisions.*

And it is further observable as an Argument of the general Concurrence of all Christians in the Belief of the Necessity and Excellency of an holy Life, that setting aside some few, who (being themselves Slaves to vile Affections) have laid down some loose Principles to patronize their own corrupt Practices, and draw after them such as are laden with the like sinful Lusts; Men of all Opinions and Perswasions have earnestly pressed Men to the greatest strictness and accurateness in their Conversations, and have served themselves at least of a shew of Holiness, as the most effectual Means to induce Men to a belief of their Doctrine.

But to come nearer to the matter, let us leave Men to suspend their Belief a while of those things which they see controverted, and where they find probable Arguments alledged on the one side and on the other, yet their Objection holds not against such Things wherein all are agreed, as are most of the Precepts of the Gospel. That Rule which was formerly mentioned, given by our Saviour, *Mat. vii. 12.* is not only allowed by all *Christians*, but by the very *Heathens*. *Alexander Severus* did so much esteem it, that

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that he would have it written upon the Walls of his Palace. So, many other important Truths, which are a sufficient Foundation of the most strict and holy Conversation, are agreed on amongst all ; as, God's *Omniscieny*, overseeing all our Actions ; a *future Judgment*, wherein all must be sentenced according to their Actions : Insomuch that even Robbers, and such as conspire in Wickedness, and seem to bid defiance to Heaven, are self condemn'd, and witnesses for God against themselves, in obliging themselves to secrecy and faithfulness to each other, by solemn Oaths, wherein they swear by the Name of that God, whose Commands they live in the open Breach of, and so acknowledge him as a Witness and Spectator of their Actions, and one who will severely punish the Contempt of his Authority, in the Breach of such Oaths. Many cannot agree indeed about methodizing their Notions, and disposing them into such a *System*, as that every Part may agree, and that there may be a Harmony in the whole.

Some cannot agree about the *Order and Nature of God's Decrees*: yet all believe that no Decree doth excuse a Man's Sin, or that any can pretend any Benefit by their Election, that have not some Evidence of it in their Sanctification. Men differ in their Notions about the *Cause of Sin* ; yet on both sides they hold that as the kind
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of Fruit is not according to the Root or Stock, but according to the Graft or Coyn out of which it immediately grows: so the Specification of Actions depends not upon any remote Causes which may have an Influence into them, but upon the Will of him that is the immediate Cause of them ; and that there is nothing in the Decrees of God, or Temptations of Satan, which will excuse the Sinner, or quit him from Guilt. Men are at variance about the *Extent of the Efficacy of Christ's Death*; but agree that none shall have any saving Benefit by it, but those that believe. Men differ about the *Power of Nature, and Liberty of the Will* ; but on both Hands, own so much Power as will leave Men inexcusable, and may be a Ground of our Endeavours ; and so much Necessity of Grace and Divine Assistance, as may bring us upon our Knees, and force us to our Prayers. Some difference there is about *Perseverance* ; but a Consent in this, that he that doth not persevere in Holiness, shall never be saved. Some difference there is about the *Hand that Works* *have in our Justification* ; but all agree that they are necessary in those that are justified. Men vary in their Opinions about the *Obligation of the Law, the Nature of the Covenant of Grace, Christian Liberty, &c.* but in this they consent, that the Things required in the Law are necessary

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ry to be done, tho' not perfectly, yet sincerely as we can: That the Covenant of Grace is not so far Absolute, that Men may be saved without Faith and Holiness: That Christians are not to abuse their Liberty, as an Occasion to Licentiousness. *Now happy is he that condemns not himself in the things which he alloweth.*

In short, let us pray, as if all depended wholly on God's Grace, without our Endeavours. *Do good Works*, as if we were to be justified by them. Trust to God's Grace and Mercy in Christ, as if we had done no Works at all. *Live* as if there were no Gospel. *Hope* as if there were no Law. (I speak not in respect of the Lowness and Servileness of our Principles, but in respect of the Diligence of our Endeavours.) Let us walk watchfully and cautiously, as if we feared falling away; yet love God, and hope in him, as if we were certain to persevere. In short, (if I may take Liberty to mention such Names) let us *pray* like Calvinists, *endeavour* like Arminians, *act* like Legalists, *hope* like Antinomians; be *Papists* in our Works, *Protestants* in our Faith. Let me again add, to prevent Mistake and Offence, I speak not of the Principles of Mens Actions, but the Matter and Substance of them; nor of what they do in Hypothesis, which comes under such distinguishing Names; but, of what such Mens Principles do really (or at least are supposed by others to) lead them to. Finally, *whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same Rule, let us mind the same Things.*

F I N I S.